THE METAPHOR OF THE CITY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION : A `TEXTUAL IMAGE' AND INCENTIVE FOR IMAGINATION

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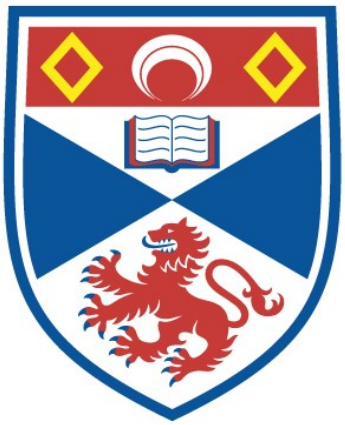

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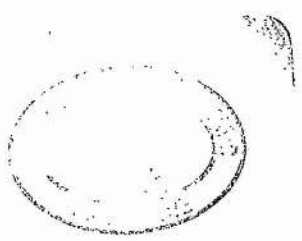

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Abstract

The Metaphor of the City in the Book of Revelation

A 'Textual Image' and Incentive for Imagination

> And I saw the city, the holy one, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, made beautiful for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: "See, the home of God is among human beings, he will live with them and they will be his people and he himself, God, will be with them and be their God.
> (Rev 21:2-3)

Throughout history, the vision of a new city, the heavenly Jerusalem coming down from heaven has inspired human beings to dream about community, society, the world. It has been an incentive to turn unsatisfied longing into utopian idea and ultimately action. The fact that the language of the Apocalypse can inspire human imagination in a highly effective manner certainly contributed to the book's controversial role in the history of New Testament interpretation. The bizarre, often-paradoxical language seems to veil rather than reveal its message. Interestingly, the book never ceased to be an inspiration for artists. It is the thesis of this study that the text embedded world of the Apocalypse can impel the reader or audience into a new understanding of world and cosmos in a manner similar to visual arts. In contrast to conceptual language, art does not confine interpretation but opens space for imagination. Using artistic expression as paradigm therefore offers considerable insights regarding the striking language in the Apocalypse. In this context, a central image, the city as it appears most prevalent in Rev 1:19-3:22; 17:1-18:24 and 21:1-22:5 is analysed as metaphorical material, which carries the power to incite the reader/audience to create mental images. To imagine provides a vital step in a dynamic interpretive process of understanding in which significant aspects of the metaphor of the city become textual visuality.

Declarations

I, Eva Maria Räpple, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 97.500 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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[1]
The Lambeth Apocalypse, Ms. 209. fol. 37v.
"The Holy City coming Down From Heaven"

Regius scribit visionis.

Et ego vidi et ecce agnum stantem super montem Sion et cum eo centum quadraginta quatuor milia habentes nomen patris eius scriptum in frontibus suis. Et audivi vocem de caelo tamquam vocem aquarum multarum et tamquam vocem tonitrui magni et vox quam audivi sicut citharoedorum citharizantium in citharis suis. Et cantabant quasi canticum novum ante sedem et ante quattuor animalia et seniores et nemo poterat dicere canticum nisi centum quadraginta quatuor milia qui empti sunt de terra. Hi sunt qui cum mulieribus non sunt coinquinati virgines enim sunt. Hi sequuntur agnum quocumque ierit. Hi empti sunt ex hominibus primitiae deo et agno et in ore eorum non est inventum mendacium sine macula enim sunt ante thronum dei. Et vidi alterum angelum volantem per medium caelum habentem evangelium aeternum ut evangelizaret sedentibus super terram et super omnem gentem et tribum et linguam et populum dicentem magna voce timete deum et date illi honorem quia venit hora iudicii eius et adorate eum qui fecit caelum et terram et mare et fontes aquarum. Et alius angelus secutus est dicens cecidit cecidit babylon civitas illa quae de vino irae fornicationis suae potare fecit omnes gentes. Et tertius angelus secutus est illos magna voce dicens si quis adoraverit bestiam et imaginem eius et acceperit characterem in fronte sua aut in manu sua et ipse bibet de vino irae dei quod mistum est merum in calice irae ipsius et cruciabitur igne et sulphure in conspectu angelorum sanctorum et ante conspectum agni et fumus tormentorum eorum ascendet in saecula saeculorum et non habebunt requiem die ac nocte qui adorant bestiam et imaginem eius et si quis acceperit characterem nominis eius. Hic patientia sanctorum erit qui custodiunt mandata dei et fidem iesu. Et audivi vocem de caelo dicentem mihi scribe beati mortui qui in domino moriuntur amodo iam dicit spiritus ut requiescant a laboribus suis opera enim illorum sequuntur illos. Et vidi et ecce nubem candidam et super nubem sedentem similem filio hominis habentem in capite suo coronam auream et in manu sua falcem acutam. Et alius angelus exivit de templo clamans voce magna ad sedentem super nubem mitte falcem tuam et mete quia venit hora tibi metere quia aruit messis terrae. Et misit qui sedebat super nubem falcem suam in terram et messa est terra. Et alius angelus exivit de templo quod in caelo est habens et ipse falcem acutam. Et alius angelus exivit de altari qui habet potestatem super ignem et clamavit voce magna ad eum qui habebat falcem acutam dicens mitte falcem tuam acutam et vindemia botros vineae terrae quoniam maturae sunt uvae eius. Et misit angelus falcem suam in terram et vindemiavit vineam terrae et misit in lacum magnum irae dei. Et calcatus est lacus extra civitatem et exivit sanguis de lacu usque ad frenos equorum per stadia mille sexcenta.

Et vidi signum in caelo magnum et mirabile septem angelos habentes septem plagas novissimas quoniam in ipsis consummata est ira dei. Et vidi tamquam mare vitreum mixtum igni et victores bestiae et imaginis illius et numeri nominis eius stantes supra mare vitreum habentes citharas dei et cantant canticum moysi servi dei et canticum agni dicentes magna et mirabilia opera tua domine deus omnipotens iustae et verae viae tuae rex gentium quis non timebit domine et magnificabit nomen tuum quoniam solus sanctus quoniam omnes gentes venient et adorabunt in conspectu tuo quoniam iudicia tua manifestata sunt. Et post haec vidi et ecce apertum est templum tabernaculi testimonii in caelo et exierunt septem angeli habentes septem plagas de templo vestiti lapide mundo candido et praecincti circa pectora zonis aureis et unum ex quattuor animalibus dedit septem angelis septem fialas aureas plenas iracundiae dei vivi qui vivit in saecula saeculorum et impletum est templum fumo a maiestate dei et de virtute eius et nemo poterat introire in templum donec consummarentur septem plagae septem angelorum. Et audivi vocem magnam de templo dicentem septem angelis vadite et effundite septem fialas irae dei in terram. Et abiit primus et effudit fialam suam in terram et factum est vulnus malum et pessimum in hominibus qui habebant characterem bestiae et qui adorabant imaginem eius. Et secundus effudit fialam suam in mare et factus est sanguis tamquam mortui et omnis anima vivens mortua est in mari. Et tertius effudit fialam suam in flumina et in fontes aquarum et facti sunt sanguis. Et audivi angelum aquarum dicentem iustus es domine qui es et qui eras sanctus quia haec iudicasti quia sanguinem sanctorum et prophetarum effuderunt et sanguinem dedisti illis dignum sunt. Et audivi alterum de altari dicentem etiam domine deus omnipotens vera et iusta iudicia tua. Et quartus effudit fialam suam in solem et datum est illi aestuare hominibus in igne et aestuaverunt homines aestu magno et blasphemaverunt nomen dei habentis potestatem super plagas istas et non egerunt paenitentiam ut darent illi gloriam. Et factum est regnum bestiae tenebrosum et commanducabant linguas suas prae dolore et blasphemaverunt deum caeli prae doloribus suis et prae vulneribus suis et non egerunt paenitentiam ab operibus suis. Et sextus effudit fialam suam in flumen magnum euphraten et exsiccata est aqua eius ut praeparetur via regibus qui ab ortu solis sunt. Et vidi de ore draconis et de ore bestiae et de ore pseudoprophetae spiritus tres immundos similes ranis. Et ecce venio beatus qui vigilat et custodit vestimenta sua ne nudus ambulet et videant turpitudinem eius. Et congregavit eos in locum qui vocatur hebraice armagedon. Et septimus effudit fialam suam in aera et exivit vox magna de templo a throno dicens factum est. Et facta sunt fulgura et voces et tonitrua et terraemotus factus est magnus qualis non fuit ex quo homines fuerunt super terram tantus terraemotus sic magnus. Et civitas magna divisa est in tres partes et civitates gentium ceciderunt et babylon magna venit in memoriam ante deum ut det illi calicem vini indignationis irae eius. Et omnis insula fugit et montes non sunt inventi. Et grando magna sicut talentum descendit de caelo in homines et blasphemaverunt homines deum propter plagam grandinis quoniam magna facta est plaga eius nimis. Et vidi mulierem sedentem super bestiam coccineam plenam nominibus blasphemiae habentem capita septem et cornua decem. Et mulier erat circumdata purpura et coccino et inaurata auro et lapide pretioso et margaritis habens poculum aureum in manu sua plenum abominatione et immunditia fornicationis eius et nomen scriptum in fronte eius mysterium babylon magna mater fornicationum et abominationum terrae. Et vidi mulierem ebriam de sanguine sanctorum et de sanguine martyrum iesu. Et admiratus sum cum vidissem illam admiratione magna. Et dixit mihi angelus quare admiratus es ego dicam tibi sacramentum mulieris et bestiae quae portat eam quae habet capita septem et cornua decem. Bestia quam vidisti fuit et non est et ascensura est de abysso et in interitum ibit et mirabuntur inhabitantes terram quorum non sunt scripta nomina in libro vitae a constitutione mundi videntes bestiam quae erat et non est et erit. Hic sensus qui habet sapientiam. Septem capita septem montes sunt super quos mulier sedet et reges septem sunt. Quinque ceciderunt unus est et alius nondum venit et cum venerit oportet illum modicum tempus manere. Et bestia quae erat et non est et ipse octavus est et de septem est et in interitum vadit. Et decem cornua quae vidisti decem reges sunt qui regnum nondum acceperunt sed potestatem tamquam reges una accipient hora bestia. Hi unum consilium habent et virtutem et potestatem suam bestiae tradent. Hi cum agno pugnabunt et agnus vincet illos quia dominus dominorum est et rex regum et qui cum illo sunt vocati et electi et fideles. Et dicit mihi aquas quas vidisti ubi meretrix sedet populi sunt et gentes et linguae. Et decem cornua quae vidisti et bestia hi odient fornicariam et desolatam eam facient et nudam et carnes eius manducabunt et ipsam igni concremabunt. Quia deus dedit in corda eorum ut faciant quod placitum est illi ut dent regnum suum bestiae donec consummentur verba dei. Et mulier quam vidisti est civitas magna quae habet regnum super reges terrae.

Et post haec vidi alterum angelum descendentem de caelo potestatem magnam habentem et terra illuminata est a gloria eius et clamavit in fortitudine dicens cecidit cecidit babylon magna et facta est habitatio daemonum et custodia omnis spiritus immundi et custodia omnis volucris immundae et odibilis quia de vino irae fornicationis suae potaverunt omnes gentes et reges terrae cum ea fornicati sunt et mercatores terrae de virtute deliciarum eius divites facti sunt. Et audivi alterum de caelo dicentem exite populus meus de illa ut non participes sitis delictorum eius et de plagis eius non accipiatis. Quoniam pervenerunt peccata eius usque ad caelum et recordatus est deus iniquitatum eius. Reddite illi sicut et ipsa reddidit vobis et duplicate duplicia secundum opera eius in calice quo miscuit misceat illi duplum. Quantum glorificavit se et in deliciis fuit tantum date illi tormentum et luctum. Quia in corde suo dicit sedeo regina non sum et vidua non sum et luctum non videbo. Propterea in una die venient plagae eius mors et luctus et fames et igne comburetur quia fortis est deus qui iudicabit illam. Et flebunt et plangent se super illam reges terrae qui cum ea fornicati sunt et in deliciis vixerunt cum videbunt fumum incendii eius. Longe stantes propter timorem tormentorum eius dicentes vae vae civitas illa babylon civitas fortis quia una hora venit iudicium tuum. Et negotiatores terrae flebunt et lugebunt super illam quia merces eorum nemo emet amplius merces auri et argenti et lapidis pretiosi et margaritae et byssi et purpurae et sericae et cocci et omne lignum thyinum et omne vas eboreum et omne vas de ligno pretiosissimo et aere et ferro et marmore et cinnamomum et odoramentum et unguentum et thus et vinum et oleum et similam et triticum et iumenta et oves et equorum et rhedarum et mancipia et animas hominum. Et poma desiderii animae tuae discesserunt a te et omnia pinguia et praeclara perierunt a te et amplius non invenient ea. Mercatores horum qui divites facti sunt ab ea longe stabunt propter timorem tormentorum eius flentes et lugentes et dicentes vae vae civitas illa quae amicta erat bysso et purpura et cocco et inaurata auro et lapide pretioso et margaritis quia una hora destructae sunt tantae divitiae et omnis gubernator et omnis qui in navibus navigat et nautae et quicumque in mari operantur longe stabunt et clamabant videntes locum incendii eius dicentes quae similis huic civitati magnae et mittent pulverem super capita sua et clamabunt flentes et lugentes et dicentes vae vae civitas illa in qua divites facti sunt omnes qui habebant naves in mari de pretiis eius quia una hora desolata est. Exulta super eam caelum et sancti et apostoli et prophetae quia iudicavit deus iudicium vestrum de illa. Et sustulit unus angelus fortis lapidem quasi molarem magnum et misit in mare dicens hoc impetu mittetur babylon civitas illa magna et amplius non invenietur. Et vox citharoedorum et musicorum et tibicinum et tubae non audietur in te amplius et omnis artifex omnis artis non invenietur in te amplius et vox molae non audietur in te amplius et lumen lucernae non luceat in te amplius et vox sponsi et sponsae non audietur in te amplius quia mercatores tui erant principes terrae quia in veneficiis tuis erratae sunt omnes gentes et sanguis prophetarum et sanctorum inventus est in ea et omnium qui interfecti sunt in terra. Post haec audivi quasi vocem magnam turbarum multarum in caelo dicentium alleluia salus et gloria et virtus deo nostro quia vera et iusta iudicia eius quia iudicavit meretricem magnam quae corrupit terram in fornicatione sua et vindicavit sanguinem servorum suorum de manu eius secundo dixerunt alleluia et fumus eius ascendit in saecula saeculorum. Et procidentes seniores viginti quattuor et animalia quattuor adoraverunt deum sedentem super thronum dicentes amen alleluia. Et vox de throno exivit dicens laudate deum omnes servi eius et qui timetis eum pusillus et magnus. Et audivi quasi vocem turbae magnae et quasi vocem aquarum multarum et quasi vocem tonitruorum magnorum dicentium alleluia quoniam regnavit dominus deus noster omnipotens gaudeamus et exultemus et demus gloriam ei quia venerunt nuptiae agni et uxor eius praeparavit se et data est illi ut cooperiat se bysso splendenti candida bysso enim iustificationes sanctorum sunt. Et dicit mihi scribe beati qui ad cenam nuptiarum agni vocati sunt. Et dicit mihi verba dei vera sunt haec. Et ego cecidi ante pedes eius ut adorarem eum et dicit mihi vide ne feceris conservus tuus sum ego et fratrum tuorum habentium testimonium iesu deum adora testimonium enim iesu est spiritus prophetiae. Et vidi caelum apertum et ecce equus albus et qui sedebat super illum vocabatur fidelis et verax et cum iustitia iudicat et pugnat. Et oculi eius sicut flamma ignis et in capite eius diademata multa habens nomen scriptum quod nemo novit nisi ipse et vestitus veste aspersa sanguine et vocatur nomen eius verbum dei. Et exercitus qui in caelo sunt sequebantur eum in equis albis vestiti bysso candida et munda. Et de ore eius procedit gladius ancipitis ut in ipso percutiat gentes et ipse reget eas in virga ferrea et ipse calcat torcular vini furoris et irae omnipotentis dei. Et habet in vestimento et in femore suo scriptum rex regum et dominus dominantium. Et vidi unum angelum stantem in sole et clamavit voce magna dicens omnibus avibus quae volant per medium caelum venite congregamini in cenam magnam dei ut manducetis carnes regum et carnes tribunorum et carnes fortium et carnes equorum et sedentium in eis et carnes omnium liberorum et servorum et pusillorum et magnorum. Et vidi bestiam et reges terrae et exercitus eorum congregatos ad faciendum bellum cum sedente in equo et cum exercitu eius. Et apprehensa est bestia et cum ea pseudopropheta qui fecit signa coram ipso quibus seduxit eos qui acceperunt characterem bestiae et qui adoraverunt imaginem eius vivi missi sunt hi duo in stagnum ardentis igne et sulphure. Et reliqui occisi sunt in gladio sedentis equum qui exivit de ore eius et omnes aves saturatae sunt carnibus eorum. Et vidi angelum descendentem de caelo habentem clavem abyssi et catenam magnam in manu sua. Et apprehendit draconem serpentem antiquum qui est diabolus et satanas et ligavit eum per annos mille et misit eum in abyssum et clausit et signavit super illum ut non seducat amplius gentes donec consummentur mille anni et post haec oportet illum solvi modico tempore. Et vidi sedes et sedentes super eas et iudicium datum est illis et animas decollatorum propter testimonium iesu et propter verbum dei et qui non adoraverunt bestiam neque imaginem eius nec acceperunt characterem in fronte sua et in manu sua et vixerunt et regnaverunt cum christo mille annis. Reliqui mortuorum non vixerunt donec consummentur mille anni haec est resurrectio prima. Beatus et sanctus qui habet partem in resurrectione prima in his secunda mors non habet potestatem sed erunt sacerdotes dei et christi et regnabunt cum eo mille annis. Et cum consummati fuerint mille anni solvetur satanas de carcere suo et exibit et seducet gentes quae sunt super quattuor angulos terrae gog et magog et congregabit eos in proelium quorum numerus sicut arena maris et ascenderunt super latitudinem terrae et circumdederunt castra sanctorum et civitatem dilectam et descendit ignis de caelo et devoravit eos et diabolus qui seducebat eos missus est in stagnum ignis et sulphuris ubi et bestia et pseudopropheta cruciabuntur die ac nocte in saecula saeculorum. Et vidi thronum magnum candidum et sedentem super eum a cuius conspectu fugit terra et caelum et locus non est inventus eis. Et vidi mortuos magnos et pusillos stantes in conspectu throni et libri aperti sunt et alius liber apertus est qui est vitae et iudicati sunt mortui ex his quae scripta erant in libris secundum opera ipsorum. Et dedit mare mortuos qui in eo erant et mors et infernus dederunt mortuos qui in ipsis erant et iudicatus est unusquisque secundum opera sua. Et mors et infernus missi sunt in stagnum ignis haec est mors secunda. Et si quis non inventus est scriptus in libro vitae missus est in stagnum ignis. Et vidi caelum novum et terram novam primum enim caelum et prima terra abierunt et mare iam non est amplius. Et ego iohannes vidi civitatem sanctam hierusalem novam descendentem de caelo a deo paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo. Et audivi vocem magnam de throno dicentem ecce tabernaculum dei cum hominibus et habitabit cum eis et ipsi populus eius erunt et ipse deus cum eis erit eorum deus. Et absterget deus omnem lacrimam ab oculis eorum et mors ultra non erit neque luctus neque clamor neque dolor erit ultra quia prima abierunt. Et dixit qui sedebat in throno. Ecce nova facio omnia. Et dicit mihi. Scribe quia haec verba fidelissima sunt et vera. Et dixit mihi. Factum est. Ego sum alpha et o. principium et finis. Ego sitienti dabo de fonte aquae vivae gratis qui vicerit possidebit haec. Et ero illi deus et ille mihi filius. Timidis autem et incredulis et execratis et homicidis et fornicatoribus et veneficis et idolatris et omnibus mendacibus pars illorum erit in stagno ardenti igne et sulphure quod est mors secunda.

Exposito... Et cum audisset sanctus iesus verba dei. Cum videret iesus civitatem ecclesiam et exortus multitudo structura. De caelo descendere quia dicto adimplendi venerunt cum illo et omnes multitudo sanctorum venerunt sicut dicit ysaias propheta. Dies adventus mei veniet cum senibus populi sui et principibus eius. Et sapientissimus salomon in proverbiis. Nobilis in portis vir eius quando sedebit cum senatoribus terre.

Introduction

Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must come about shortly; by sending his angel, he made it known to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all that he saw. (Rev 1:1-2)[1]

Thus begins one of the most debated biblical books, the Apocalypse of John. Promised is an apocalypse, a revelation, an uncovering of things that were hidden or barely visible before. Yet what is revealed in the book hardly seems to have ever been a matter of unanimous consent. The book has inspired never ending scholarly debates throughout the centuries. The seemingly limitless variety of differing, sometimes antithetical interpretations of the book of Revelation bears witness to the difficulties the reader encounters exploring the world of the Apocalypse.

[1] Translations of the book of Revelation by Eva Maria Räpple. Unless otherwise noted, all other Scripture quotations are cited from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible, Copyrighted 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Available: Michael S. Bushell and Michael D
© 1998 *Bible Works* (Version 3.5. revised 12/19/96) [CD-Rom] (Big Fork: Hermeneutika 1992-97).

Interestingly, the book never ceased to be an immense inspiration for artists who would express their interpretations of the Apocalypse in artistic compositions, especially visual arts. At Moissac (France), the visitor enters the 12th century cathedral *St. Pierre* through a portal with God seated on the throne, worshipped by the four creatures and the twenty-four elders high above the floor. The tympanum unfolds Rev 4:1-11 as revelation engraved in stone. Throughout medieval history, visualizations of the Apocalypse produce an enormous wealth of artistic expressions; among them, the famous painted and gilded manuscripts that bear witness to the beauty and drama of the text. Albrecht Dürer's woodcuts conjure up visions of demonic spirits and violent forces in confrontation with the power of God, while Michelangelo's last judgment in the Sistine Chapel presents a most impressive story in its own right. These are only very few examples of the immense inspiration this book has provided for artists as well as the ones who observe their works.

Does artistic expression possibly offer a more powerful interpretation of the Apocalypse than current historical-critical approaches? Could it be that this work reaches towards the limits of language and therefore opens itself to other means of expression? Could it be that the language of artists, which enjoys the freedom to explore meaning beyond the boundaries of space and time in the crystallization of images, is apt to capture the essential message of this book and therefore provides a more fruitful mode of interpretation?

"The Holy City Coming down from Heaven," [1] a thirteenth century miniature from the Lambeth Apocalypse [1] in Lambeth Palace Library,[2] provides an eloquent example, in which the significance of the biblical text is revealed and enlightened by means of artistic expression. The text of Rev 21:2 is made visible in the miniature: "And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."[3] John, and with him the reader of the codices, receives the revelation of the heavenly city. While the city is still in the distance close to sun and moon, heaven and earth are invoked to become one signified by John's hand, which is almost reached by the angel's gesture. The city in the distance reminds one of the worldly city, secured by its walls, gates and towers, yet transformed by the radiant reflection of light from the gold.[4] The power of the A and Ω is evoked in the striking brilliance of the earth and heavens' pervading gold, as if the great voice coming from the throne can be heard:

> "Behold, the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all

[2] [1] Lambeth Palace Library. *The Lambeth Apocalypse,* Ms. 209. fol. 37v. (Library photo, with permission). Text includes a critical study by N. Morgan, with a contribution on the palaeography by M. Brown in: Lambeth Palace Library. *The Lambeth Apocalypse* Ms. 209. Vol. 1 & 2 (London: H. Miller 1990) 238.

[3] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.

[4] Medieval artists used gilding, a technique, in which fine layers of thin leafed gold where applied to the manuscripts. The gold produces startling effects because of its reflective characteristics.

> tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away." (Rev 21:3-4) [5]

In this miniature the text speaks. It becomes a lively adaptation of most significant aspects, condensed and sharpened in the picture. The purposely-arranged combination of text and visualizations offers guidance for readers/audience in their response to text patterns, which do not necessarily follow a logical sequence in the Apocalypse. The composition of miniatures and text, which includes the Apocalypse according to the *Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome* and parts of an 11th century commentary by Berengaudus, is a multifaceted interpretation of the Apocalypse.

The question is,how does a text like the Apocalypse become an incentive for artistic visualization? What interpretive strategies can be employed to open the path from text to imaginative exploration? David Jasper argues:

> We need to be bold in the recognition of different ways of reading, in the exercise of different hermeneutical principles. Contemporary literary theory readily demonstrates the value of different critical approaches to a text, slipping under certain presuppositions and fallacies, becoming more wary, even if less certain.[6]

He claims that reading strategies are necessary, which allow for complexity and plurality rather than a securely controlled biblical text.[7] Studying the modern history of scholarship on the book of Revelation frequently seems to substantiate

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[5] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.
[6] D. Jasper, *Readings in the Canon of Scripture: Written for our Learning* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1995) Ibid. xvi.
[7] Ibid. xvi.

Jasper's claim that the biblical text is often guarded by traditional patterns of interpretation and its history as a sacred text.

Although the Apocalypse has proven to be one of the key texts of the Bible, which provide an incentive for artistic expression and fervent action, commentaries, and interpretations of this work in modern biblical scholarship, as we will see below, rarely provoke a creative reader/audience response and excitement. Could it be that the recurrent tendency in biblical criticism to objective analysis, finding accurate reference and meaning in a poetic text like the Apocalypse inhibits its exceptional potential to induce imaginative thought? If we recognize the poetic, allusive textual imagery in the book of Revelation and acknowledge that it is a text that encourages readers to explore, imagine and think, interpretive approaches need to provide space for those qualities to expand on possible new perspectives. If this is the case, our task as interpreter cannot any longer be to deliver definite meaning but to assist in the search for different readings, new perspectives, and insights provoked in the dialogue with the text.

Dialogue with the Text

It is arguable that one problem in modern scholarship is that the connection between contemporary scholarly interpretation and everyday human existence is sometimes at the brink of breaking off or has already broken off, so that avenues of interpretation are needed to allow for a dialogue between reader/audience and the text. For that reason, it is important that strategies are explored that resist the foreclosing of symbolic metaphorical language in a text like the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse certainly provides the reader/audience

with provocative material. Yet this does not necessarily mean that we are still irritated by this text. An interpretation of the Apocalypse can profit from a deliberate attempt to alienate the reader/audience from an all too familiar text to confront its disturbing evocative potentiality. Jasper draws on Herder's recognition that the book of Revelation is a poetic text and therefore suggests, "that poetry and art will most immediately reverberate with its symbols and recapitulative structure."[8] As I will argue in this thesis, opening the dialogue between an ancient text and its reappearance in poetry and art can be of assistance in our attempts to avoid the foreclosure of poetic mythic language. Moreover, the analogy to artistic expression can also offer significant insights into the process of reading/listening to a text like the Apocalypse.

It is my thesis in this study that the text-embedded world of the Apocalypse can impel the reader or audience into a new understanding of world and cosmos in a manner similar to visual arts. This means that through the process of textual visualization the world and cosmos is depicted in a colourful, comprehensive mode, which as a necessarily partial and never fully completed reality depiction, opens space for critical evaluation, hope, imaginative exploration and thought. As in artistic creations, the Apocalypse provokes its readers to uncover an "unfinished world" as potential for change towards the possible. It is an incentive arising from the compositional quality of the textualized image, which, in analogy to artistic creations, sharpens the decisiveness of expression. In art, the world appears as essential moment and

[8] Ibid. 119.

place, an exploration of all its dimensions of depth, yet brought to the surface in the object of art. Ernst Bloch calls art in this sense a

> laboratory and also a feast of possibilities, together with the thoroughly experienced alternatives therein, whereby the implementation and the result occur in the manner of founded appearance, namely of worldly perfected pre-appearance.[9]

Art seeks "worldly perfected pre-appearance" (welthaft vollendeten Vor-Schein)[10] in a manner of appearance still immanent in the immediate sensual or historical reality of the world. In that sense, wherever art does not commit itself to pure illusion, art becomes a mediator for the possible as worldly perfected pre-appearance. The biblical context extends such pre-appearance, exploding appearance in art beyond its worldly confines towards an Absolute, a New World, the heavenly Jerusalem. In that sense, critical evaluation of worldly reality in the Apocalypse establishes the possibility of the New Jerusalem as world completed, transformed into the heavenly city, the city of God.

The city in the book of Revelation is a powerful text-embedded image, which evokes the visualization of possibilities of life in community. Speaking

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[9] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight (Massachusetts: MIT 1996) 216.

[10] E. Bloch uses the word "Vorschein" to describe aesthetic immanent meaning cloaked in images:

> Künstlerischer Schein ist überall dort nicht nur bloßer Schein, sondern ein in Bilder eingehüllte, nur in Bildern bezeichenbare Bedeutung von Weitergetriebenem, wo die *Exaggerierung und Ausfabelung einen im Bewegt-Vorhandenen selber umgehenden und bedeutenden Vor-schein von Wirklichem darstellen,* einen gerade ästhetisch-immanen spezifisch darstellbaren.

E. Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung,* Kapitel 1-32 (Frankfurt [Germany]: Suhrkamp1985) 247.

with Bloch, it encompasses a "feast of possibilities." It is a feast that allows the mind to venture beyond the boundaries of past and present into the future, beyond the boundaries of worldly space, exploring a horizon of possibilities. In various appearances as harlot, Babylon, the city of God as well as in references to major historical cities in Asia Minor, it suggests a comprehensive picture, in which earth and heavens become a dialectically joined textualized image, which stimulates the critical exploration of possibilities of life in community as well as hope for the transformation of the earthly city into the heavenly. The city, as it appears embedded in the text of the Apocalypse, as incentive for imagination, hope, thought and action, will be the focus of this study.

Idea of the City

Since antiquity, the city has provided an important image of hope, ideas and ideologies. From the time of its foundation, the city of Jerusalem has been an image for religious beliefs as well as political convictions. The apocalypse of 4 Ezra bears witness to the antagonism between a theological vision of a new kingdom and political reality among Jewish people during the end of the first century C. E.[11] In Greece, Plato and Aristotle develop their ideas about the ideal city/state concerning the city of Athens; for Cicero it is Rome. Seven centuries later, Augustine writes his vision: the *Civitate Dei*, now under Christian perspective, to name only some of the most famous ideas and visions about the city. Since the early Christian communities were developing in urban areas and Christianity was spreading from city to city, it is not surprising that we find the

[11] Dating of 4 Ezra according to M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress 1990) 9-10.

question of the identity of a Christian city considered in a New Testament text. Although the local setting plays an important role, the reflection on the ideal city furthermore deals with a universal question, the question of the human being in community. About two thousand years later, this question today, in a different world, still evokes reflections as well as disputes about the nature and organization of the possibly best or ideal city. Our aim in this thesis is to search for answers to this universal question, answers that are possibly evoked through an encounter between a reader/audience with the idea of the city in the book of Revelation.

The City in the Book of Revelation

In the book of Revelation, the image of the city plays an important role, an observation that has been pointed out by scholars but, to my knowledge, has not been investigated thoroughly regarding the nature and implications of its metaphorical depiction within the perspective of the whole book.[12] The author of the book of Revelation addresses his apocalyptic-prophetic visions to communities that are located in some of the major cities in Asia Minor (Rev 1:19-3:22). In Revelation 11:8 "the city, the great one" is prophetically named "Sodom and Egypt." The city also appears in the metaphor of the harlot Babylon (Rev 17:1-18:24), the bride (Rev 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17) and finally in the concluding vision of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-22:5). The author has

[12] E.g. D. Georgi in his analysis of the heavenly Jerusalem: D. Georgi, "Die Visionen vom Himmlischen Jerusalem in Apk 21 und 22." *Kirche: Festschrift für Günther Bornkamm zum 75. Geburtstag,* D. Lührmann and G. Stecker ed. (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 1980) 351-72.

woven this image into central sections of the book, the beginning part, the middle sections and the end.

Most prominently, its importance becomes apparent in the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. Here, the city image presents the concluding vision, the climax to the whole book. This focus on the image of the city does not deny the importance of other central images like e.g. the Lamb or the beast. Yet it allows us to concentrate and deepen our analysis of one important image in the book of Revelation and to explain its interrelation with other central images.

The image of the city is elaborately woven into the overall text of the Apocalypse. References to the seven communities are thoroughly integrated into the prologue, the inaugural vision (Rev 1:4, 11, 20), while images related to the heavenly city reappear in the postscript (Rev 22:14-7). The proclamations to the seven communities (Rev 2:1-3:22) and the final vision of the city of God (Rev 21:1-22:5) are interrelated with and framed by the first and last part of the book, which presents the Lord God and Christ, "the Alpha and Omega" (Rev 22:13 also 1:8). Closely connected are the central themes of the Lord and the Lamb's ultimate power in relation to the communities in the world, while the correlation between the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem and the seven bowls indicates an explicit linkage between the themes of judgment and salvation. The vision of the bride, the city Jerusalem, as wife of the Lamb, is linked with the onset of the seven final plagues in Rev 21:9.

> Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

The evocative metaphor of the harlot Babylon appears as dramatic image among the final judgment scenes (Rev 17-20), indicating her central role in the war between heaven and the forces of evil. However, references to the city do emerge throughout the apocalyptic visions of judgment (Rev 11:2, 8, 13; 14:20; 16:19; 20:9; 22:14, 19). The motif of the women offers a particularly extensive range of possible connotations, which allows for an extensive metaphorical network, linked throughout the text (e.g. Rev 2:20b-23b; 12:1-17; 17:1-18:24; 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17). The image of the city, although most elaborately appearing in Rev 2-3:22; 17-18:24 and 21-22:5, is thus certainly not confined to these chapters but artfully interwoven into the whole context and intrinsically related to other central themes and parts of the Apocalypse.

Image of the City as Narrative Metaphor

Although the image of the city is a component of the overall composition of the Book of Revelation, we will especially concentrate our attention in this study on Rev 1:19-3:22; 17:1-18:24 and 21:1-22:5, in which the image is particularly prominent. We will examine some perspectives that are single entities of the text but form the "textual image" in correlation and contrasts with each other. In analogy to visualized artwork, we will focus on the comprehensive textual picture as it appears throughout the chapters of the Apocalypse. This means that our interpretation follows the image of the city as it evolves throughout the text. It is an attempt to analyse the "textual image," in which the tension between differing parts of the extended narrative (Rev 1:19-3:22; 17:1-18:24 and 21:1-22:5) creates its composition and metaphorical

dimension. In the textual composition, the different parts of the extended metaphor all contribute in some way or another to that textual image. This study will explore the composition of the textual image of the city in the Apocalypse as extended narrative metaphor referring to the idea of the city, as evocative textual image and incentive for imagination, hope, thought and action.

1. Interpretations of the Apocalypse

The vivid images of the book have stimulated a turbulent multitude of interpretations across the centuries. Not rarely, these interpretations were at the centre of fervent disputes. Quite frequently during the history of the book, its visionary language has encouraged dangerous interpretations, at times initiating dreadful historical consequences. Studies of millenarian movements clearly demonstrate the important role the Apocalypse has played as incentive for fantastic or revolutionary ideas, even as ferocious inspiration for wars.[13] Today, in a generally more moderate climate, in which the battles are frequently fought verbally, the text seems to cause great obstacles for modern interpretive methods, at times leading to its rejection and neglect altogether.

Before proposing our own methodological model for the analysis of the textualized visuality in the book of Revelation, it will be worthwhile to investigate different interpretative methods that have been used in the past. Particular attention will be given to traditional interpretations illuminating the image of the city, the central image, analysed in the later parts of this investigation.

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[13] Important studies of milleniarism during the middle ages include: N. Cohn *The Pursuit of the Millenium* (New York: Oxford University, rev. ext. ed. 1970) esp. 25-9; 64-5. and R. Bauckham's analysis of Protestant apocalyptic thought in sixteenth century England: *Tudor Apocalypse: sixteenth century apocalypticism, millennarianism, and the English Reformation : from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Oxford [Eng.]: Sutton Courtenay Press 1978) esp. 91-112; 320-40.

1.1. Classical Interpretations of the Apocalypse

Among the earliest commentators of the Apocalypse, a particular interest in the time and nature of the millennium (Rev 20:4-6) was very prominent. Many of them were historical *Chiliasts* who focused on a period of ultimate divine triumph over the forces of evil in human history, the millennial reign on earth, before God's final realization of an everlasting kingdom. Possibly, this interpretation has its origin in the struggle with Gnostic ideas, which forcefully emphasized spiritual salvation.[14] The second century apologist Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* thus affirms the belief in this millennial reign of Christ advocating a period of thousand years with Christ in the earthly Jerusalem:

> I and others are right-minded Christians in all points and are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned and enlarged. [15]

Tertullian's argumentation against Marcion supports a similar interpretation:

> For we do profess that even on earth a kingdom is promised us: but this is before we come to heaven, and in a different polity-in fact after the resurrection, for a thousand years, in the city of God's building, Jerusalem brought down from heaven, which the

[14]A. Y. Collins, "The Book of Revelation" in: J. J. Collins ed. *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* vol.1 (New York: Continuum 1998) 409.
[15] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 80f. Trans. T. B. Falls (Washington: Catholic University of America Press in Association with Consortium Books 1977 c1948).

> apostle declares is our mother on high: and when he affirms that our politeuma, our citizenship, is in heaven, he is evidently locating it in some heavenly city.[16]

As peculiar as the preoccupation with the millennium might appear to a modern mind, it certainly reflects a central question: how to conceive the relation between the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem. In a Jewish-Christian context in antiquity, interpretations concerning Jerusalem were of crucial importance to political as well as religious ideas about the earthly community and city and continued to inspire imagination throughout history.[17]

Allegorical Method

A decisively different perspective and new methodological approach to interpretation arose around the end of the fourth century C.E. Greek thought particularly influenced the so-called Allegorical Method. Tyconius,[18] who used this method for the interpretation of the book of Revelation, dismissed the former *realistic eschatology* of the *Chiliasts* and emphasized the spiritual and mystical sense behind the historical-literary meaning. Tyconius explored the

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[16] Tertullian, *adv. Marcion* III, 24, 3. Trans. and ed. E. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University 1981).

[17] N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium.* Also C. C. Rowland, *Radical Christianity: A Reading of Recovery* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, c1988) 82-161.

[18] Unfortunately, Tyconius' complete commentary on the Apocalypse is lost. The fragmentary manuscript of the Turin Codex F.IV.I.18 contains the chapters ii.18- iv.1 and vii.16-xii only. See *The Turin fragments of Tyconius' commentary on Revelation* Francesco Lo Bue ed. (Cambridge [Engl.]: Cambridge University 1963) 3. Yet the logic of his exegetic argumentation is known from his "Liber regularum" in which he outlines seven "mystical" compositional principles of Scripture, emphasizing historical realization of prophecy while denying the temporal and cultural view that allowed millenarian interpretations. Tyconius, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* Trans. and notes W. S. Babcock. SBL. (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1989).

"general in the particular" or the extended reference of specific historical persons, events or statements.

> Making faith the price of truth, the Spirit produced an account marked by mysteries, concealing the general in the particular: for instance, the whole city, now spread throughout the world, in the old Jerusalem...[19]

Tyconius correlated eschatological future with historical present, which allowed him to interpret the text as hortatory admonition for the Church, a Church that he understood as a mixed community, consisting of true and false Christians. The division of the Church and condemnation of her leaders as "falsa ecclesia" is reflected in his interpretation of Rev 2:20-22. The prophetess Jezebel is stigmatised as representative of the false Church under the name of Christ, with the charges of fornication and seducing idolatry:

> He says, I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU THAT YOU TOLERATE THE WOMAN JEZEBEL, WHO CALLS HERSELF PROPHETESS, which means a Christian prophetess, AND TEACHES AND BEGUILES MY SERVANTS TO PRACTICE IMMORALITY AND TO EAT FOOD SACRIFICED TO IDOLS. Certainly, it signifies spiritual fornication and idolatry in the name of Christ. For in which way does she openly <teach> the worship of idols, she who calls herself prophetess? You see, she shows her closeness to Christianity disguising corporal adultery and spiritual adultery. She has demonstrated that this is also idolatry.[20]

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[19] Tyconius, *The Book of Rules of Tyconius* 55.
[20] *The Turin fragments of Tyconius' commentary on Revelation* 49-50. Trans. Eva Maria Räpple.

Tyconius' method of spiritual interpretation found a most prominent follower, in Augustine, the African Bishop of Hippo. In 403 C.E., Augustine began his work on *The City of God*, which would influence Western thought for centuries to come. Originally, Augustine intended to refute the charge that Christianity was responsible for the fall of Rome (410 C.E.). The work finally became a comprehensive interpretation of history and cosmos from a Christian perspective. The two cities Babylon and Jerusalem, the two cities of heaven and earth, are central images, which allegorically unfold the antagonisms of life: good and evil. In his monumental work, Augustine uses the symbol of the two cities to trace the history of humanity from creation to the end of time. The city of God ultimately refers to eternity as God's promise of salvation, a promise that is not given to any worldly empire but to the Christian Church. Christianity becomes a concept that is not relegated to the boundaries of any worldly empire but is conceived in cosmic dimensions. For Christians, this interpretation attributes special importance to the faith of the individual Christian as part of the whole world. Augustine's interpretation is an impressive summary of Christian theology of his time under the image of the city, a mystical view meditating earth and heavens in Christian terms. It does not come as a surprise that a comprehensive concept of a universal Christian community emerged at a time when Christianity finally had gained political power in the western world in antiquity. Augustine's work directs attention to the important role which the visionary images of the Apocalypse can play in political reality.

In the *City of God,* Augustine deliberately offers interpretations like the following, which reject extremist Chiliastic positions:

> We must understand in one sense the kingdom of heaven in which exist together both he who breaks what he teaches and he who does it, the one being least, the other great, and in another sense the kingdom of heaven into which only he who does what he teaches shall enter. Consequently, where both classes exist, it is the Church as it now is, but where only the one shall exist, it is the Church as it is destined to be when no wicked person shall be in her. Therefore, the Church even now is the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven.[21]

Allegoric interpretation largely extends possible perspectives on the book of Revelation. Yet Augustine's reading of the biblical text also contributed to a concept of the Church that would, at certain times, embrace and legitimise exuberant worldly power and supernatural authority as gracious gift from God! In particular, during the middle Ages, this interpretation paved the way for ideas in which the earthly reality of a power hungry Church could be propagated as the heavenly kingdom of God in the world.[22]

Historicizing Interpretations

During the twelfth century, with Joachim of Fiore, world history was again distinctively recapitulated in the predictions of Revelation. For Joachim, the book of Revelation held the key to the meaning of history, which he saw as a series of purifying stages. E. Randolph Daniel comments on Joachim's innovative concept of interpretation:

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[21] Augustine, *Civ. Dei.* (XX.9) Trans. M. Dods (New York: Random House1993) 725-26.

[22] Regarding Augustine's great influence on history during the medieval period see G. Kretschmar, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung im 1. Jahrtausend* (Stuttgart: Calwer 1985) 106-7.

> Whereas Augustine concentrated on the two-cities, effectively seeing the era of the Church as an indefinite period of time during which the predestined would be saved and the reprobate damned, Joachim emphasized the evolution of historical entities, generations, peoples, and orders within a meaningful, definite chronological framework. For Augustine, the Apocalypse functioned primarily as guide toward and opening into heaven. For Joachim, it was the key to the meaning of human history.[23]

He distinguished between three periods of time: the time of the Father in the Old Testament; the time of the Son, the New Testament; and the time of the Holy Spirit, characterized through peace on earth which he thought to be ultimately the time of perfect monasticism. In Joachim's time, his explanations soon were used as interpretation for the new Franciscan order with its hope and inspiration for a renewal of Italian early capitalism and the church. The new spirituality was closely connected with the reform movements during the eleventh and twelfth century, which, in the search for meaning in human history, attempted the reform of the earthly Church. Especially among the less fortunate in society the visionary language of the Apocalypse ignited hopeful visions and served as incentive to fight for the holiest city in the world of Christians, Jerusalem. The Crusades present a most infamous example of a vision that would lead many into destruction, suffering and death. Likewise, the vision of a new heaven and new earth, quite frequently encouraged a critique, which led to questioning social conditions, and even violent opposition to the authority of the Church and the monarchy. Norman Cohn traces the political and

[23] E. Randolph Daniel, "Joachim Fiore: Patterns of History in the Apocalypse" in. *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* R. K. Emerson, B. McGinn eds. (Ithaca: Cornell University 1992) 87. Concerning the important influence of Joachim's

socio-cultural history of revolutionary eschatology during the Middle Ages in Europe and offers a survey of that period of time, a historical account of visionary hope, repeatedly leading into suffering and destruction.[24] Unfortunately, the images and visions of the book of Revelation more often seem to have guided the masses into Babylon than towards the heavenly city Jerusalem. Throughout the centuries, interpretations have struggled with this reality. They quite often reflect a story of "distorted interpretations," specifically, if judged according to their historic influence.

Joachim's methodological approach greatly influenced another application of the Apocalypse in which the visionary language of the Apocalypse is used for apologetic purposes. Of these, the interpretation of the Church in Rome as the great city, Babylon, is surely one of the most prominent. Although not an invention of Protestant reformers,[25] this identification became a popular image and gained vital importance in Luther's dispute with the Roman papacy.

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work, see also W. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenheock und Ruprecht 1906) esp. 73-81.

[24] N. Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium.*

[25] Its history particularly extends back to the Church-Imperial conflicts of the eleventh century CE. See G. A. Krodel, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Revelation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House 1989) 14-23.

One just has to picture Lucas Cranach's drawing of the most beautiful woman in Luther's original translation of the "Neue Testament Deutsch" who characterizes the harlot Babylon, [2] wearing the papal crown![26] The fact that lively images like the harlot Babylon seem to open almost limitless space for

[26] [2] L. Cranach d. Ä. Blatt 17: M. Luther, *Septembertestament 1555.* See: P. Martin, *Martin Luther und die Bilder zur Apokalypse. Die Ikonographie der Illustrationen zur Offenbarung des Johannes in der Lutherbibel 1522 bis 1546* (Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig 1983) 79.

interpretation has certainly contributed to some of the more obscure readings of the text in history.

The question, which criteria of evaluation can be reasonably argued for, should be important for any methodological approach. Yet this question is crucial for an interpretation of the Apocalypse because of the power of persuasiveness fundamental to visualization and images.[27] The history of interpretation of these images provides vital evidence for their effective transformation from persuasive textual visualization to historical action, at times disastrous action.

1.2. Source, Redaction, and Historical Criticism

The question of reasonable criteria has indeed become important in most methodologies today used as strategies for the interpretation of the Apocalypse. Over and against historicizing approaches, the original historical

[27] This study does not venture into the question of the psychodynamic power of visual images, which surpasses the scope of this analysis. For that reason, we refer the reader to the insightful study of D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago 1989), which especially focuses on symptoms of response originating from the relationship between image and beholder.

situation of the text of the Apocalypse has become a central question.[28] This especially includes inquiries into the possible historical context of the text, using the techniques of philology, form, source and redaction criticism and, more recently, socio-cultural, rhetorical analysis and feminist reading. Tying the text to its probable historical origin allows for interpretation in the possible framework of the original readers/audience in antiquity. Yet this methodological approach often confines this interpretation predominantly to its historical context and audience.[29] The question arises, whether this important and necessary criterion can encompass the multifaceted dimensions of images which are characteristic of the book of Revelation. Since the text has not ceased to generate responses throughout the centuries, we certainly need to deal with the fact that meaning is not exclusively dependent on a complete reconstruction of the most likely original context. This is not to deny that the historical critical method, in particular socio-cultural analysis and feminist readings have offered interesting perspectives for a modern context, by evaluating the historical setting in dialogue with a modern reader experience. The question is whether we might not need models that extend the classical methodologies through an analysis of

[28] An overview of methodological approaches concerning the city imagery among prominent scholars from the beginning of the late nineteenth century can be found in Loyd Dale Melton, "A Critical Analysis of the Understanding of the Imagery of the City in the Book of Revelation" Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Louisville: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1978). His focus is on the contemporary-historical exegesis as "most fruitful methodology for interpreting the city-imagery of the apocalypse" (237). Melton does not consider current literary methodologies, rhetorical analysis, or the role of the city imagery in artistic expressions, approaches that are central to this thesis.

[29] See Christopher C. Rowland regarding perspectives in historical criticism and modern exegesis including the role of art and philosophical theological works influenced by apocalyptic thought: "The Book of Revelation; Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" in: L. E. Keck ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol. XII (Nashville: Abingdon c1998) 544-57.

the distinctive mythic language of the book. [30] Before developing a model, we will consider more closely some of the most influential modern methodologies in order to present their important contributions as well as deficiencies regarding interpretation of the Apocalypse.

Source and Redaction Criticism

Source and *Redaction Critical Investigations* proposed a series of different hypotheses regarding the editorial process of the book. For the city in the book of Revelation, this implies that the various treatments of the image are attributed to different stages of revision, sometimes to several authors. A well-known example is R. H. Charles' classic commentary, in which he employs a very elaborate reconstruction theory of different sources and editorial changes for the composition of the book of Revelation.[31] The text of the Apocalypse with its web of complex imagery has always challenged conventional exegetical approaches, rational thought and logic. Still, it seems likely that the "vivacity" of the text is very often consumed by innumerable attempts to resolve illogical structures. Time and again, the text appears to lose its energy when subjected to efforts to resolve its complexities. R. H. Charles' commentary is a prime example in which a strategy that identifies and rearranges textual material via source and redaction criticism, resolves "weird obstacles" in an otherwise apparently incoherent composition. Such particularization minimizes awareness

[30] Regarding a working hypothesis for mythic language see chapter 2.3.
[31] R. H. Charles *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994) Vol. I & II. A recent approach that methodologically closely follows R. H. Charles reorganization of the text is Josephine Massyngberde Ford's commentary on *Revelation* (Garden City: Doubleday 1964). Concerning her theory, see esp. 3-57.

of composition and paradoxical structure. The effect is that poetic distinctiveness is robbed of its uniqueness and effectiveness, which, as I will argue, essentially rests in its 'weird' composition, at least according to the categories of conventional logic. As valuable as the identification of possible sources and interpolations can sometimes be, today many scholars acknowledge that inconsistency and repetition are quite common literary techniques and often a specific characteristic of mythological language. An analysis of the uniform language, the structure, recurrences of symbols and images throughout the text has thus led most modern scholarship to support the unity of the text.[32]

Historical-Critical Readings

In *Historical Critical Readings* of the text, the seven cities addressed in the proclamations have often become an important focus since their historical existence in Asia Minor is attested by literary and archaeological evidence. The historical cultural and socio-political conditions of the ancient city of Rome, the economic and political centre of the world at the beginning of the second century, have long been of major interest. Throughout history, the city Rome has been favoured among many interpreters as the likely primary historical context for the image of the harlot, Babylon. In recent years, some exciting new insights

[32] Richard Bauckham calls the Apocalypse "one of the most unified works in the New Testament." *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1993) 1. J. P. Sweet uses the fact that revelation originally was read aloud as key to the logic of the work, which he sees as "an impressively coherent whole." *Revelation* (London: SCM 1979) 35. J. T. Kirby argues for effective rhetorical characteristics as unifying quality, while Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza explicates the synthesis of differing literary styles as device to communicate the books prophetic message. J. T. Kirby "The Rhetorical Situation of Revelation 1-3" *NTS* 34. (1988) 197-207 esp. 204. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation. Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress1989) 170.

into a likely original historical situation of the author and his/her audience/readers have come from socio-political and economical analysis of the text.

A central debate in modern historical investigations has been the question of the most likely original purpose and audience of the text. Several scholars argue against a prominent opinion that the Apocalypse was written as a response to a historical situation, in which Christians were violently persecuted in the Roman Empire. Historical data from the period of time, the reign of Domitian, and the place, Asia Minor, in which the book of Revelation most likely originated, do not seem to support this traditional theory.[33] Adela Yarbro Collins thus concludes that the Apocalypse responds to a perceived *crisis*, "one that resulted from the clash between the expectations of John and like-minded Christians and the social-reality within which they had to live." [34] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza assumes that the Apocalypse confirms religious belief in a situation of tensional socio-cultural historical experiences, offering a "political theo-ethical world of vision."[35] Leonard L. Thompson understands the text as "Jewish-influenced Christian mythos," which, in its original historical situation, was meant to shape socio-political situations and power through perceptions and beliefs of those who actualise the mythic vision in real life.[36] Using models from the social sciences, another interesting scenario for the original historical

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[33] For an extensive discussion on historical data, see L. L. Thompson *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University 1990).
[34] A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis* (Philadelphia: Westminster 1984) 165.
[35] E. Schüssler Fiorenza *Revelation Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress 1991) 117.
[36] L. L. Thompson *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire* 8.

situation of the audience/reader of the Apocalypse is presented by Philip F. Esler. According to his thesis, anti-Roman mythopoesis using witchcraft accusation functions to provide a "scapegoat for problems that are largely internal to the seven congregations."[37]

The proclamations to the seven communities seem to be the passages most likely to offer general information about the text in its original historical setting.[38] Yet repeatedly, the lack of certain historical references in the text has directed the focus of some scholars towards rather insignificant details in the book of Revelation. In succession to the work of Sir William Mitchell Ramsay, a nineteenth century historian who travelled extensively throughout Asia Minor, Colin J. Hemer concentrates his analysis on a historical exegesis of the proclamations to the seven Churches. He tries to find historical and social parallels to the text in numismatic, literary and epigraphic sources. However, very often these references seem to be quite insubstantial and often do not carry much weight for the entirety of the work. The highly visionary, mythological character of the text by and large appears to make research regarding the original historical setting extremely complicated.

Another approach explores the symbolism of the Apocalypse in relation to Greek and Oriental pagan mythology. Hermann Gunkel in his analysis found a strong influence of Babylonian myth especially reflected in Rev 12.[39] Adela

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[37] P. F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London/New York: Routledge 1994) 145.

[38] C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (JSNTSup 11; Sheffield: JSOT 1968) 20.

[39] H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Jo 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1921).

Yarbro Collins argues that the mythology of combat serves as "conceptual framework" to interpret a situation of persecution among Christians:

> In the overall context of Revelation, the combat myth functions to interpret a situation of persecution...This depiction provides a framework in which the readers of the book can understand their situation and thus be strengthened in their resolve to endure."[40]

In a similar quest, scholars, like Franz Boll and Bruce J. Malina try to elucidate the Apocalypse through the lens of ancient astral knowledge, interpreting Revelation as a Jewish-Christian interpretation of Greco-Roman astrological myth. This method of interpretation certainly offers novel views and insights concerning influential ideas and allusive references in the text. The mythological language is an important aspect of the text of the Apocalypse and definitely worth more research. Yet as with any method, an analysis of the mythological references should not lose sight of the enormous diversity of literary devices in the Apocalypse. Concerning Malina's reading, it seems doubtful, whether the most impressive message of the book is its astral myth, whether astral prophecies are "the major concrete, actual items that the author was talking about."[41]

In particular, against traditional historicizing readings, the historical

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[40] A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation.* "Harvard Dissertations in Religion 9" (Missoula: Scholars Press 1976) 3.
[41] B. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation* (Peabody: Hendrickson 1995) xvi. See also F. Boll, *Aus der Offenbarung des Johannis* (Leipzig, Berlin: Teubner 1914) 41.

critical method offers criteria that help confine distinctive boundaries for interpretation. More importantly, the historical dimension of the text, as will be argued in this study, is an essential part of an analysis of visionary language. The problem of how to relate actual reality and symbolic imagery has been answered in many different and sometimes obscure ways, at least from a modern perspective. Scholars today are provided with an ample variety of methods to investigate special perspectives on the book. Numerous insights have come from these interpretations. However, the initial problem still exists that any study on the text has to account for the tension between actual reality and symbolic imagery. The question is, whether the historical dimension of a text becomes the absolute criterion for interpretation or whether other dimensions are allowed to raise their voices too. As absolute criterion, historic categorization destroys the mythological characteristics of any text, in particular a visionary text as the book of Revelation! While history plays a very important role in this investigation, an overly secure confidence in historical reconstruction poses a critical challenge for textual imagery in the Apocalypse. The legacy of the Enlightenment period with its trust in the author and the discovery of original meaning, still casts its shadow.[42] History in this paradigm claims objective results. The challenge arises whenever the creative level of evocative language is abandoned in favour of a belief in the definite explanatory qualities of the historical paradigm. Assuming language as obviously referential, scholars like C. J. Hemer[43] contribute to the

[42] Seán Kealy, "At Loss When Faced with Apocalyptic" *ITQ* 53 (1987) 296. Regarding the influential role of the European Enlightenment period on conceptions of knowledge see: T. Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press 1995) 48-63.
[43] C. J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches.*

foreclosure of imaginative possibilities. The text is effectively removed from lively existence, safeguarded in the captivity of biblical scholarship. Since the text is embedded in history, the question of the role of history needs to be part of our interpretive approach. Yet, if we want to avoid the destruction of evocative poetic imagery, historical reconstruction cannot unquestionably determine the retrieval of original meaning if room is to be left for imaginative thought and action. In particular, apocalyptic thought can open dimensions of past present and future existence towards a new horizon for readers/audience in a process from textuality to imaginative creativity. It will be a major aim of this thesis to tackle the correlation between textuality, historic reality and imagination in our interpretation. History thus is a significant aspect of an analysis of textual visuality, interrelated with other aspects, not a particularized rationale for interpretation. Accordingly, the focus on original historic probability alone does not offer sufficient tools for any in-depth analysis of the mythic language in the Apocalypse. It therefore needs to be complemented by other modes of analysis.

1.3. A Critique of Current Scholarly Appreciations of the Metaphorical Dimension of the Apocalypse

Increasingly, modern scholarship tries to integrate research regarding the literary character of the book into historical critical readings. Such analysis uses a variety of techniques to analyse the overall composition, structure, and use of patterns and images that are significant configurations of language and are important aspects of the reader/audience experience with the text.[44] Yet among the diverse literary readings, so far to my knowledge, no attempt has previously been made to investigate the image of the city in the book of Revelation under the dynamics of metaphorical language.

Impediments to a Systematic Treatment of Metaphoric Language

A significant difficulty arises from a tradition in which metaphor is categorized among the tropes and understood as figure of speech, but not considered as principle for investigating the dynamics of compositional narrative structures, poetic language, and images as suggested by modern theories of metaphor.[45] Thus, William W. Reader, in his extended study of the city in the

[44] E. g. John M. Court who argues for extended methodological pluralism regarding interpretations of the Apocalypse. *Revelation* (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1994) esp. 18-20.

[45] For a discussion of models of metaphor see esp. 2.2.

Apocalypse identifies Rev 21:1-22:5 as an extended, colourful image.[46] Yet he establishes no connection between metaphoric language and imagery. The word metaphor is treated as classical figure of speech that can be accurately identified and not evaluated as paradigm for surprisingly paradoxical language. The tendency to denote and explain imagery, rather than explore or confront metaphorical language, deprives the text of significant evocative qualities. Reader contrasts metaphoric connotation to eschatological-spiritual meaning. In regard to (Rev 3:12) he concludes: "the image here has not simply metaphorical connotation but is used as perception of an eschatological-spiritual construction."[47] Metaphor in Reader's study functions as mere decoration, not as a principle of language and a spur for imaginative thought. Moreover, his approach, in which he uses redaction and source criticism as indicators for theological tendencies in the book of Revelation, is an endeavour to solve aporias and explain a possibly incoherent composition. Such an approach largely restricts awareness of paradox and 'illogical logic' as characteristic of metaphoric language.

Another important obstacle for an appreciation of metaphoric language resides in the classical format of the modern historical critical commentary. The general tendency to look at particular passages, single sentences or words, does by and large not support an analysis of an extended metaphor. The text is broken into small units. Such a dissection of the text does not promote an appreciation of complex compositional structures which underlie the metaphorical network of the

[46] W. W. Reader "Die Stadt in der Johannesapokalypse" Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation (Göttingen: University of Göttingen 1971) 3.
[47] Ibid. 216. Trans Eva Maria Räpple.

city. It should not come as a surprise that metaphoric language is either not specifically discussed in commentaries, as for example those of Josephine Massyngberde Ford, Heinz Giesen, or Robert W. Wall, or is simply mentioned as characteristic of traditional mythological stories. [48] Thus Jürgen Roloff finds a "series of original myths with foreign characteristics" inserted into Rev 12:1-8 in which John "resorts to a mythological metaphoric language."[49] Yet the paradigm of metaphoric language is not a noteworthy part of the analysis.

Other scholars try to circumvent the difficulties imposed by the classical format of the historical critical commentary by dedicating excurses to the structure and symbolic imagery. Thus, in his commentary, John Sweet inserts a passage in each chapter deliberately tracing comprehensive webs of structural compositions which he identifies as the auditory logic of the text.[50] Although such an approach has the advantage of alerting the reader to the importance of compositional structures in the Apocalypse, these introductory passages provide an abstract rationale that cannot do justice to the evocative characteristics of metaphorical language.

Studies Considering Poetic Visionary Imagery

In his recent approach to the book of Revelation, John Court explicitly opts for pluralism in method that includes specific attention to images, literary genres, symbolic structures and reader-response.[51] His decision to read the book

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[48] H. Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet 1997); R. W. Wall, *Revelation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991); J. Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation.*

[49] J. Roloff, *Revelation.* Trans. J. E. Alsup (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 144.

[50] *Revelation* (London: SCM 1979)

[51] *Revelation* 7-20.

of Revelation by themes demonstrates alertness to imagery, thematic perspectives and compositional characteristics of the text. However, how deliberately he implements those proposed methods in his interpretation is questionable. In reference to J.-P. Ruiz's work, Court specifically identifies the imagery in Rev 17-18 and 21-22 as metaphoric unity:

> John takes three motifs (prostitute, beast, city of Babylon) from his prophetic sources in Ezekiel, Daniel and Jeremiah. He blends them into a metaphoric unity in his vision, whereby this woman, animal and city must yield to another woman (the Churches the Bride of Christ) and another city (New Jerusalem), through the agency of another animal (the Lamb that was slaughtered).[52]

In this context, he considers the use of metaphors as "splendid example of intertexuality" and "an apocalyptic text which uses metaphors to confront real issues in a contemporary crisis."[53] Yet he does not explore this potentiality of metaphoric dynamic further. The treatment of metaphoric unity is exemplary of Court's implementation of modern methodology. As in his earlier work, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation,* he feels more comfortable in finding accurate connections between passages in the Apocalypse and a historical situation or, as in the above quotation, the biblical tradition than in exploring the evocative potentiality of metaphoric language.[54] While he argues for an integration of the

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[52] J.-P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17 - 19,10.* European University Studies: Theology Series #376 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 1989); J. Court, *Revelation* 65 identical wording also 89.
[53] Ibid. 65.
[54] J. M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* (London: Fakenham 1979).

rich imagery and symbolism as a work of art, his interpretation generally explains imagery definitely rather than confronts the reader/audience with visions of an alternative world as he claims.[55]

Very different is Jacques Ellul's reading of the Apocalypse which pays special attention to the poetic imagery. Using structural analysis, he compares the function of the text with a "play of mirrors" in which "the reality to which it refers can be grasped only by a triangulation of these inverse images."[56] Ellul is clearly aware of the complex composition and resists the fragmentation of the text maintaining that "meaning is situated, in the relationship of part to part, in their connection, their progression."[57] Although he is not working from a hermeneutical concept of reader-response, his overall meditative mode does not imprison poetic language in scholarly explanation and therefore leaves space for imagination.

The city, as essential image, is dealt with explicitly, not only in the historical context, but also in its universal relevance for humanity:

> ...the city is the instrument of the revolt of man against God. On the one hand, it is the world of man, which he has desired to set up as a counter-creation with the distinct will to exclude God; on the other hand, it is the point of crystallization of the pride and power of man. The city is the negation of the omnipotence of God; it is the closed door of man's walling himself up against any relation with the Creator.[58]

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[55] *Revelation* 19.
[56] J. Ellul, *The Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation* (New York: Seabury 1977) 15.
[57] Ibid. 18.
[58] Ibid. 223. Another example, offering insights into the poetic-theological dimension of the text, is A. Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images* (Boston: Beacon 1949).

Ellul does not provide a clearly defined analytical model for his literary approach, nor does he specifically investigate the dynamics of metaphor, yet his study is a reflection upon the imagery that does not destroy the metaphorical dimension of the text.

Studies Distinctively Exploring Structural Compositions

In another literary approach, particular attention is paid to allusions to biblical texts as well as non-canonical Jewish/Christian apocalypses.[59] In this context, a recent study by Steve Moyise advocates a renewed evaluation of OT references in the book of Revelation. Moyise proposes to examine "the current text while being mindful of a previous context (or contexts)" and follow the "dialogue within the text and the text within the text," which through tension between the two texts creates evocative new figurations of ideas and messages.[60] Yet how this phenomenon of "tension" works on the level of the text and reader/audience, is not clearly delineated in this study. A summary of contextual accounts which 'affect each other' replaces serious investigations regarding the phenomenon of intertextuality.

In her study, Edith McEwan Humphrey considers female imagery in the Apocalypse under the aspect of symbolic transformation.[61] Her goal is to compare four representative narratives, including the Apocalypse, to investigate the combination of "the image of a building (city or tower) with that of a

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[59] R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy.*

[60] The S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (JSNTSup 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1995) esp. 18, 135, esp.108-138.

[61] Edith McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities. Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas* (JSP; Sheffield: Academic Press 1995).

woman...with an ear for the metaphorical 'grammar' of the texts, and with an eye to the cues, or 'lures' that the text itself provides."[62] The strength of her work certainly lies in her deliberate analyses of the compositional structures of the text. Yet how far her notion of metaphorical 'grammar' reaches is not clear, especially since she opposes imagery and metaphor with the concept of transformation:

> The reader does not have to do simply with imagery or metaphor that expresses confidence or hope in God's faithfulness; he or she is presented with the envisioned transformation of a central female character, a transformation which is crucial to the drama of the Apocalypse.[63]

Humphrey here treats metaphor as a figure of speech that can easily be decoded, not as principle of thought and imagination. Moreover, her emphasis on the feminine figures in Revelation 12 and 21 excludes the harlot Babylon and Jezebel as part of her analysis. Since Humphrey endeavours to investigate compositional structures, it is questionable whether such a selection of positive imagery can be justified.

A thought provoking reflection, emphasizing the importance of literary structure and composition for the theological meaning of the visionary images, is Richard Bauckham's book, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation.*[64] The evocative power of images originating from allusions to the Old Testament as well as contemporary myth and the historical reality is explored in its relevance

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[62] Ibid. 20.
[63] Ibid. 23.
[64] R. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge [UK]: Cambridge University 1993).

for the theological message of the book. His careful approach resists the premature identification and explanation of symbolic imagery and therefore the destruction of evocative imagery. Moreover, Bauckham, who considers the "astonishingly meticulous composition of the book" as an essential aspect of evocative imagery in the Apocalypse, deliberately uses this concept in his analysis in which he traces literary cross-references, parallels and contrasts as complex literary networks. While his approach provides valuable insights regarding the structural composition, the evocative dynamic of metaphors as spur for imagination and action needs further exploration.

Interesting therefore is the new approach undertaken by Bauckham and Trevor Hart in their recent work *Hope against Hope.*[65] The study explores the potential of biblical images to serve as incentive for imagination and hope as anti metanarrative to the present failure of secular hope caused by the modern confidence in the idea of progress. Bauckham and Hart do not specifically survey the textuality of images, nor do they treat the language of the Apocalypse comprehensively. Yet, the deliberate attempt to investigate major Christian images as spur for imagination is a welcome advance exploring the dynamics of provocative language.

Studies Considering Visionary Rhetoric

Schüssler Fiorenza in her work on the Apocalypse challenges a search for definite meaning in which she specifically calls for attention to the "ambiguity, openness, and indeterminancy" as important characteristics of the poetic and

[65] Bauckham-Hart, *Hope against Hope.*

invitation to "imaginative participation"[66] Schüssler Fiorenza links poetic qualities with the visionary rhetoric which "seeks to persuade and motivate by constructing a 'symbolic universe' that invites imaginative participation."[67] She calls for the following criteria regarding rhetorical analysis of the Apocalypse:

> In interpreting Rev as a rhetorical work we must therefore look *first* for the strategic positions and textual relations of symbols and images within the overall dramatic movement of the book. *Second,* we must pay attention to the explicit rhetorical "markers" that seek to "channel" the audience's understanding, emotions, and identifications in such a way that it is persuaded and moved to the desired actions. [68]

Nonetheless, in her analysis she does not explicitly explore poetic textuality and subordinates it to her historical-critical reading for which it is a response.[69] Poetic-mythic language is ultimately controlled by the original socio-historical context. Yet a visionary text like the book of Revelation is not confined to the historical readers/audience and certain socio-cultural parameters. The rhetoric of possible ideas evoked by the powerful imagery needs to be addressed as dynamic process, in which rhetorical power becomes influential throughout history. Rhetorical analysis needs to be able to raise the question of the purpose of discourse in conversation with differing historical perspectives of audience and reader. In other words: the original social-historical-political parameters are not

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[66] Schüssler-Fiorenza E. *The Book of Revelation. Justice and Judgment* 186, 87.
[67] Ibid. 187.
[68] E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Social-Political Situation" *Semeia* 36 (1986): 131. Also E. Schüssler Fiorenza *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1985) 187-99.
[69] Ibid. 183.

the "ultimate horizon"[70] of the book of Revelation but the rhetorical goals pointing towards an "ultimate horizon" can become action in any socio-political-religious situation through the response of the reader or audience. However, in considering the role of poetic-rhetorical language in the Apocalypse, Schüssler Fiorenza has significantly motivated further research in the evocative power of visual images.

Among those studies are in particular modern *Feminist Critical Readings,* which bring attention to the significance of gender related symbolic language of the Apocalypse.[71] While these studies do not explicitly deal with metaphorical language, the comprehensive textual compositions that provide the basis for female imagery become the focus in these investigations. *Feminist Criticism* thus explores literary configurations, argumentative premises of a text as well as rhetorical strategy to investigate their power of persuasiveness and historic influence on the socio-cultural role of women in western societies.

Accordingly, Barbara R. Rossing *The Choice Between Two Cities,* explores the topos of the "evil woman" versus the "good woman" as rhetorical strategy. While Rossing identifies the two city visions as comprehensive concepts, her identification of the two female figures, the bride and the prostitute as evocative of a "familiar ethical stereotype or *topos,"* severely restricts the

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[70] Ibid. 192.

[71] B. R. Rossing *The Choice Between Two Cities: Whore, Bride, and Empire in the Apocalypse* Harvard Theological Studies 48 (Harrisburg: Trinity 1999); also T. Pippin, "The Reproduction of Power: Feminism, Marxism, and the Ideology of Reading" *Paper presented to The Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts Consultation AAR/SBL* New Orleans, 1990. 1-16; T. Pippin, *Death and Desire* (Westminster: John Knox 1992); E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation Vision of a Just World* 12-15.

dynamics of metaphorical language.[72] As topos that can be explained according to prophetic and Greco-Roman city traditions, the language is safeguarded in scholarly interpretation and a lively concept is turned into a dead metaphor. [73] Even if Rossing's conclusion to her work is correct, that the "choice for the good woman that the author of Revelation wants us to make is not a gendered choice nor an individualistic choice but rather a political choice," history has amply proven that the metaphor of the woman as city in the Apocalypse definitely holds the potential for reader/audience response that is not confined to such a political reading. [74]

In a very different approach, Tina Pippin on the other hand specifically sets out to explore evocative qualities of the woman as city for a twentieth century reader. Although Pippin does not propose an interpretive model for a metaphorical investigation in her reading, metaphoric language is taken seriously in its potential to provoke thought and imagination as existential reader experience:

> I want to feel and see and hear and touch my way through the narrative. The blood and violence and genocide and ecocide and war and salvation of the few and vision of God's new world is an experience on the cosmic level. [75]

Pippin strongly criticizes the tremendously negative characteristics of female imagery in the Apocalypse, which provoke misogyny and contribute to

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[72] B. R. Rossing *The Choice Between Two Cities: Whore, Bride, and Empire in the Apocalypse* 14.
[73] Ibid.15.
[74] Ibid. 165.
[75] T. Pippin, *Death and Desire* 16.

the marginalization of women. According to Pippin, women are excluded from the City of God.[76] A problem with such an analysis is that it presumes a reading of the text from an exclusively modern Western perspective. Her interpretation thus suggests that the evocative power of the image can be completely detached from the historical situation.

A sophisticated analysis of visionary rhetoric is presented by Thompson in *Apocalypse and Empire*. Thompson explicitly considers the significant function of poetic and mythic language in shaping social intercourse and action. The classical figure of speech is for Thompson the principle for myth: "Myth metaphorically transgresses boundaries that normally divide aspects and dimensions of the everyday world."[77] Thompson provides an important advance, since he does not treat metaphoric language as a decorative figure of speech but as an indispensable principle of religious language and incentive for action. However, because Thompson's primary interest is "in the situation of the author and the situation of those to whom the book was originally addressed," he does not specifically pursue an exploration of evocative characteristics of metaphoric language and myth.[78] His investigation of metaphoric language is overall controlled by its function to "mirror", "shape", and "structure" social historical experience.[79]

While not investigated under the concept of metaphoric-mythic language, visionary rhetoric also plays an important role in *Liberation Hermeneutics*. This approach examines the persuasive goals of language in regard to present and

[76] Ibid. 70.
[77] Ibid. 47.
[78] Ibid. 3.
[79] Ibid. 200.

future for readers in a historical situation of injustice. This interpretation strongly emphasizes the political eschatological perspective of the Apocalypse as encouragement for the oppressed. Allan A. Boesak, for example, reads the Apocalypse as a text that reflects on the situation of black churches in South Africa. The book of Revelation actively promotes change in the current socio-political reality of oppression:

> As in other times, John's book has much to say to our own times, and especially those of us who, like the churches of John's time, must live under political oppression. Once again the Christian church is drawn into the struggle between God and the gods. Once again we are forced to make a choice between the living God and the powers of death and destruction. The modern gods of racism, militarism, materialism, and oppressive political and exploitative economic powers confront us with fearsome reality, demanding obedience, loyalty, and slavish submission...the Apocalypse is an exciting, inspiring, and marvellous book. It is a book which, in our sociopolitical situation, is a constant call to conversion and change. It is prophetic, historical, contemporary.[80]

In their readings, Christopher Rowland and Pablo Richard also recover the radical critical role of the text, the "unmasking of reality," and "alternative vision of how things might be" as vital message in various historical contexts.[81] The visionary world of the Apocalypse is explored as powerful inspiration for hope, and motivation to eliminate oppression in this world. It is a Christian interpretation which uses the Apocalypse to unveil the ideology that conceals

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[80] A. Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from South African Perspective* (Philadelphia: Westminster 1987).
[81] C. C. Rowland, *Radical Christianity* 10.

the reality of domination. Time is interpreted as essential time in which the historical ancient and the modern city merge with the New Jerusalem:

> There is only one history, but it has two dimensions: one empirical and the other transcendent. The new Jerusalem comes down from heaven to earth: theologically this means it goes from its transcendent condition to an earthly condition: it enters into the empirical, visible dimension of history.[82]

In another reading, Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther in *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* examine context and traditional imagery of the text as tools to expose aspects of the modern historic reality of economic globalisation. They seek to unveil the imperial power of global capital hidden behind an insinuating idealization.[83] While these readings are not specifically interested in the literary model for an analysis of evocative power, their contribution lies in the exploration of imaginative thought and action as reader-response to textual visuality. The rhetorical readings accentuate the possible forceful role of the Apocalypse in stimulating protest against the status quo and provoking a vision of a new reality.

Broadening the Boundaries of the Classical Exegetical Commentary

The foregoing analysis of current scholarly appreciation regarding the metaphorical dimension of the Apocalypse demonstrates a distinctive difficulty which scholars face in their interpretations. Studies trying to analyse and explain

[82] P. Richard, *Apocalypse* (Maryknoll: Orbis 1995) 162.
[83] H. Brook and A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* (Maryknoll: Orbis 1999) esp. 236-77.

textual properties rarely incorporate the dynamic characteristics of visual imagery. In contrast, approaches that explore evocative imagery and visionary rhetoric rarely offer distinctive insights into specific characteristics of textuality. Metaphorical language is thus often destroyed in a search for definite explanation and objective textual analysis. Conversely, the characteristics of textuality are frequently left behind in an exploration of the imaginative realm. Underlying such dichotomy is a struggle for interpreters between the Scylla of absolute objectivity and the Charybdis of unleashing boundless interpretive readings.

An investigation into textual visuality confronts any reading with the problem that the promise of a distinct objectivity can no longer be taken for granted as the only criterion for interpretation. Yet this does not free us from the responsibility to struggle with textuality as well as imaginative visuality. To meet these difficulties, I will argue that the dynamics of metaphorical language can provide important insights regarding the textuality of a poetic-mythic text like the Apocalypse. If perceived as paradigm in a hermeneutical process, which includes text, context, and the reader/audience, an analysis of a metaphorical network like the city in the Apocalypse can possibly serve as the all-important link between textuality and visuality.

However, there is always the threat that language is decoded rather than explored and the metaphorical dimension turned into a lifeless description. To avoid such dangers Rowland argues:

> The exegetical commentary on a biblical text like Revelation needs to be complemented by the artistic exposition of the text. Indeed, a commentary cannot do justice to the character of apocalyptic discourse in the way that a picture or poem can."[84]

I agree with Rowland that there is a vital need to release lively words that are frozen in textual analysis and explanation. Rowland does not provide a paradigmatic model as to how such an analysis should be performed but inserts a variety of artistic expressions into his commentary.

To reach out in language and imagination towards a reality that is already the culmination of all reality necessarily challenges us with the explosion of our human concepts in the paradox of language and imagery. We need to resist the urge to dissolve apparently 'weird' imagery and compositional strategies into fortified concepts as a way of shielding our reading from the temptation of confining God and the kingdom of God in our own language and iconoclasm. Metaphoric language in the Apocalypse disturbs in order to provoke a search for the divine beyond the humanly created idea of God. I argue therefore, that we cannot treat the textual and the imaginative level as separate entities any longer, but need to confront textual visuality seriously in the Apocalypse.

The wealth of artistic representations of the Apocalypse certainly suggests that an important interchange exists between visual and verbal elements in our reading. As I shall try to make clear, the power of textuality in the Apocalypse to prompt thought, imagination and ultimately, as history has sufficiently proven,

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[84] Rowland, "The Book of Revelation; Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" 550.

action, essentially rests in its fragmentary paradoxical complex composition, a fragmentary paradox that time and again resonates with an often paradoxical, fragmentary, and chaotic structure of human existence itself. Authors like Bloch or William Blake have expressed exactly such a paradoxical interrelatedness between the text of the Apocalypse and existence in their works. Still there is another dimension inherent in the fragmentary paradoxical composition of textuality in the Apocalypse. Language here, in provoking "playful creativity" rather than "passive intellectual conformity," is essentially dialogical, requiring the active imaginative participation of the reader/audience to reach out towards new horizons of meaning, in a Christian context, towards participation in God's creativity.[85] This also means, the strangeness of the text, the at times uncomfortable language, often requires confrontation rather than explanation, similar to an artistic expression, in which certain appearances in the work are simply not meant to be completely unravelled but offer an open space that allows imaginative exploration towards a dimension that continuously escapes human language and representation. Such an approach also changes the role of the interpreter who is not an unquestioned authority on logical explanation but an assistant in the experiment of reading the text.

[85] T. Hart, "Through the Arts: Hearing, Seeing and Touching the Truth" in: J. Begbie, *Beholding the Glory: Incarnation Through the Arts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 2000) 16.

2. Methodology of this Study

> It is at the level of the imagination that the fateful issues of our new world-experience must first be mastered. It is here that culture and history are broken, and here that the church is polarized. Old words do not reach across the new gulfs, and it is only in vision and oracle that we can chart the unknown and new-name the creatures. [86]

Amos Wilder's words are a plea for the vital force of visionary imagery in the formation of world, culture and history. The textual image of the city in the book of Revelation is a complex vision of a new community/city, an image that explores failure and possibility in a Christian context. The Apocalypse ventures out to the future, encompassing history, the world and the cosmos. This exciting adventure asks the reader/audience to sense a vision of a new world without disregarding the reality of the past and present.

Imaginative Exploration

As I tried to argue in the last chapter, there is an urgent need for a methodology that allows the mind to explore imaginatively, to resist a foreclosure that all too often deadens a textual image like the city in the Apocalypse. One important characteristic of imaginative exploration is that it is based on sense experience, for example the encounter with a text like the Apocalypse. Yet the imagination is not confined to the literality of the text but can venture beyond. It is our imaginative capacity that allows us to "make sense" of symbolic images like the beast, the harlot or the bride. In other words,

[86] A. N. Wilder, *Theopoetic* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1976) 1.

imagination allows us to envision presentations as human beings, community, objects, situations that do not appear to us in the same manner in the text or reality. While any act of imagination is initially taking up reality, it also includes the ability to defy certain aspects of this reality. In this sense, imagination is a critical force towards reality, "basic to our ability to deconstruct the dominant, ideologically generated accounts of who and how and what we are, and to insist on an alternative way of seeing things in the present."[87]

Moreover, it is our imaginative thought that allows us to conceive patterns in an otherwise boundless terrain of confusing possibilities. It is an act, in which the reader/audience perceives patterns of significance. This is of particular importance for metaphorical language that appears to be a signature of the book of Revelation. Highly unconventional compositional structures populate the Apocalypse: the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, is the Lamb (Rev 5); the holy city Jerusalem coming prepared as a bride (Rev 21:2), the harlot is the city, the great one (Rev 17). The language in the Apocalypse provides obstacles. The reader/audience of the Apocalypse is constantly confronted with such "absurd" passages at least according to a literal reading of the text. To make sense of these passages means that the readers/audience need to confront incomprehensible wording in the text, perceiving similarity, yet not completely. Exploring those "illogical patterns," while resisting the urge to resolve paradoxical structure, requires the ability to imagine new perspectives that are nevertheless not completely independent from the world of the text and its

[87] R. Bauckham and T. Hart, *Hope against Hope* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 1999) 86.

reader/audience. In contrast to fantasizing, imagination is thus firmly rooted in real possibility of this world.

Likewise, the visionary language of the Apocalypse continuously seems to burst boundaries of time even more violently than other forms of language. In the cosmic perspective of the Apocalypse lines of historicity disappear under an obscure fusion of past, present, and future. Only imaginative thought allows for the freedom to engage in an exploration of time that becomes recreated time through interpretation. Including a concept of imaginative thought in our methodological approach allows us to deal with time as process rather than a fixed moment in history. Similarly, imagination opens the possibility that space is not limited at all by references to historical places. On the contrary, imaginative thought and imagery can respond to the unenclosed geographical domain of language. It is thus a creative search for significance in the boundless terrain of possibilities in which the mind can consider textual material as diverse patterns of significance. Such a search for significance of course drastically changes perspectives on interpretation because what formerly could be called "recovery" of meaning has become a dialogue with the text in the context of concrete existence. Bearing in mind the immensely important role of imagination our methodological approach will include a brief investigation into patterns of imagination as particularly recognized by Mary Warnock. [88]

[88] M. Warnock, *Imagination and Time* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell 1994)

Confronting Textual Visuality

In the previous chapter we identified the scholarly tendency to resolve paradoxes in language and composition as an important obstacle to our exploration into the textual visuality of the Apocalypse. We argued that the interpretation of a text like the Apocalypse rather requires an effort to explore language that ultimately explodes boundaries of language. Yet how is it possible still to confront the book's provocative language, traversing dangerously familiar textuality imprisoned in the fabric of tradition and cultural perception? How do we avoid the widening gap between experience and textuality in the Apocalypse? Like Jasper and Rowland, I see considerable assistance in juxtaposing non-biblical literary as well as artistic approaches with a text like the Apocalypse to revive our perception of its irritating textual visuality.[89] In this study, I will place emphasis on a particularly unconventional thinker, Bloch, who explores humanity's existence under the fragmentariness of apocalyptic thought. In his encyclopaedic work, *The Principle of Hope*, he elucidates patterns of human existence as means to venture beyond in an anticipation of a horizon of "Not-Yet-Conscious, Not-Yet-Become."[90] As a most remarkable poet, Bloch allows the reader to become alienated from all too familiar thought patterns and not rarely the biblical text. More importantly, in Bloch's thought, human existence, mental imagery and artistic expression are each recognized as influential realms for genuine hope. His work, in following diverse manifestations of imaginative thought throughout history, can therefore offer

[89] D. Jasper, *Readings in the Canon of Scripture: Written for our Learning* xvi-xvii. Rowland, "The Book of Revelation; Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" 550-555.
[90] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* 6.

guidance in our own exploration of the dynamic function of textual visuality in the text of the Apocalypse. His analysis provides us with a paradigm for imaginative vision in which text and existence are not separate entities but intrinsically interrelated realms. In a poetically striking, as well as philosophically challenging thought pattern, Bloch continually wrestles with discontinuities of language, art and existence, which imaginative hope might transgress or in which humanity just as well might be lost forever. To bring Bloch's perspective into dialogue with our textual image can assist our resistance to succumbing all too easily to conventional readings and patterns of interpretation that pretend theologically to guide us into the heavenly Jerusalem.

Metaphor as Paradigm

Yet, we also need to explore the text on its level of textuality. Why does a text like the Apocalypse inspire imaginative thought as well as artistic expressions? Our charge against various interpretations of the book of Revelation was directed against a tendency to dissect a complex composition of the text, since the structural design of textual elements effectively shapes the textual image. The path towards imaginative thought and mental imagery via paradoxical language that we have sketched so far, leads us back to a classic figure of speech as a fundamental concept in language, the metaphor. The lion of Judah who is the Lamb, the harlot who is the city, provide the nuclear structure of the language paradox that, in its potential to evoke a playful search and dissident vision rather than defined meaning, inspires the search for possibilities of what has not been encapsulated and imprisoned in words. Modern theories about metaphor, as for example developed by Janet Martin Soskice, thus explore metaphoricity as a

fundamental concept of human language, and religious thought and imagination.[91] The encounter with metaphorical language provokes a search for hypothetical possibility. Such a concept, while initially employing the figure of speech as paradigm, ventures far beyond the classic notion of metaphor into the compositional structure of the narrative, imaginative thought, and existence itself. As Paul Ricoeur emphasizes in *The Rule of Metaphor*, metaphor is the paradigm for creative 'fictional redescription' motivated by poetic language, in which text and redescribed reality are intrinsically linked through productive imagination in the act of "seeing as."

> The place of metaphor, its most ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula *to be*. The metaphorical "is" at once signifies both "is not" and "is like." If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in equally "tensive" sense of the word "truth."[92]

Dialectic at the heart of metaphor as hermeneutical principle will serve as our link between text and visual textuality and, what Ricoeur calls "truth" in a "tensive sense," thus acknowledging the deliberate open space of the paradox that does not resolve the existential tension between the possibility of Nothingness or the All.

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[91] J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon 1985).
[92] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto 1975) 6-7.

2.1. The Visual Dimension

Imagination

The history of artistic expressions utilizing the Apocalypse in visual arts bears witness to the immense impact this text has had on imagination. Visualization thus has been an important aspect for interpretations of the Apocalypse. Warnock's work, elaborating on philosophical theories of imagination from Hume to Wittgenstein, will be particularly helpful to elucidate the connection between text and visuality, the transition from physical-optical perception of the written to the intellectual dimension of association, thought and idea. Following Immanuel Kant's thoughts on imagination (Einbildungskraft) as essential universal power of understanding the world, Warnock explicitly develops the function of imagination to apply universal concepts to perceptual experience of the world.

> Without imagination, we could never apply concepts to sense experience. Whereas a wholly sensory life would be without any regularity or organization, a purely intellectual life would be without any real content. And this amounts to saying that with either the senses or the intellect we could not experience the world as we do. The two elements are not automatically joined to each other in their functions. They need a further element to join them. The joining element is the imagination; and its mediating power consists in its power to bring the chaos of sense experience to order according to certain rules, or in certain unchanging forms. The imagination obliges us to see the world as bearing these forms whenever we see it at all. It must construct our world into objects which exist

> independently of ourselves, which persist through change and which manifest some regularly associated features. [93]

To make mental images is thus the essential link between the chaos of sense-experienced world and an ordered universal, which Warnock calls the "sense or significance of something, which is not present to us in fact." It is a way of finding relations, imagining a composition according to certain rules. The way of bringing these compositions about is by finding analogous relations.[94] Imagination as link between the experienced data of the objective world and intelligible thought or the world of ideas thus finds the significant or universal in the particularity of the sense-experienced world by way of analogy.

> If we are successfully imagining something, then, this is what we are doing: either by physical or non-physical analogues we are calling up the sense or significance of something which is not present to us in fact.[95]

As already noted, the Apocalypse has not lost its appeal throughout the centuries because of its universal message. It seems to me that the attempt to visualize metaphorical language in mental images is exactly the work, which finds the significant, the universal in the particular of the text. This mental image might be brought into an objectified expression, the picture. If this is true, then the making of mental images is the important link between text and understanding. It is the link that finds order in the accumulation of words, phrases, sentences,

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[93] M. Warnock, *Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber 1976) 30-31.
[94] Ibid. 171.
[95] Ibid. 171.

associations and connotations transforming it into mental images and concepts, which then can become objectified expressions in art. Imagination is also the link that identifies the significant in the world of the text as the idea or universal by means of analogous thought. This means the process of visualization of the text is a combination of imagination, understanding and apprehending the sense or significance of the text, which ultimately is objectified in the form of a picture.

There is another important aspect regarding the function of imagination: it necessarily incorporates the world of human experiences. The relation between the external world of the text or the picture and its perception incorporates the notion of the response of the reader or observer. This means, sensing significance does not necessarily happen on the level of abstract thought as purely cognitive act. It can and often does involve the whole human being, who in sympathy or antipathy reacts to the text or picture. In particular, highly evocative texts such as the Apocalypse are capable of stimulating powerful imaginative responses, in which ideas turn into lively impressions.

> Poets and orators, imaginative geniuses, can do this. They can present us with ideas in so forceful a manner as to make us feel, or see that which they describe. After all there is no absolute difference in kind between ideas and impressions.[96]

[96] Ibid. 20. We will not be able to develop a theory of emotional response here, which surpasses the scope of this analysis. For this we need to refer the interested reader to other works. Regarding the context of visuality and imagination, D. Freedberg provides a critical evaluation of the range of human

"Fragmentary Images"

We need to follow this trail further to explore the provocative power of the Apocalypse to become incentive for thought and ultimately action, which, as history has proven so often, has been the result of its evocative visual images. Bloch, the unconventional thinker and prophet of hope, explores the analogy between experienced world and art as critical theoretical incentive for practical realization of the possible. His monumental work, *The Principle of Hope,* traces the imprints of objectified representations as revelations of the mystery of the world. Among the various possible expressions, artwork plays a considerably significant role as visualized "cipher," in which the world appears condensed to its significance for the meaning of humanity and horizon of all being.[97] It is this function, which makes great art the stimulus for hope, the unsatisfied "hunger" for the possible.[98] His perception of great art as "cipher," reveals Bloch's way of finding analogies between objectified expression and the mystery of the world.

Great artwork, according to Bloch, lives as appearance of visible fragmental pre-appearance, as "play" on representations that are not fully developed as exact representations of the real world. While art is

> immanently more achieved, more thoroughly formed, more essential than in the immediate-sensory or immediate-historical occurrence of this Object...all great art shows the pleasant and homogenous aspects of its work-based coherence broken, broken up, leafed open by its own iconoclasm, wherever immanence is not driven to closeness of form and content, wherever it still poses as *fragment-like.* Here - completely

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responses to images including the role of empathy in perception and imagination. *The Power of Images* esp. 161-91.

[97] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 219.

[98] Ibid. 306.

> incomparable with the mere contingency of the fragmentary in the avoidable sense - another hollow space of the factual, highly factual kind opens up, with *unrounded immanence.* And it is precisely in this space that the *aesthetic-utopian meanings* of the beautiful, even the sublime make their presence felt.[99]

According to Bloch, great art as fragment carries within itself the tension between pre-appearance of the All and appearance of the Not-Yet. It is this tension that gives great art its evocative power, a power that incites imagination to explore dimensions of possibility. It is this tension, which distinguishes great art radically from photos. While photos do convey a certain historic moment most precisely and depict detailed realism, this is not the case in visual arts. Art is not constrained to historical places or time. While it undoubtedly depicts reality, the artistic expression is a condensed image, which necessarily features an inadequacy of reality depicting. It is the fragmentary character, which actually makes great art "lively." The inspirational quality of great art thus is incentive to imagine the "sense or significance" of the image and venture out into the possible completion of the fragmentary. In a sense, it is therefore more comprehensive than the photo and at the same time fractional of any reproduction of historic reality. It is in this "fragmentary character" of art that Bloch finds the analogous relation to the unfinished world, which causes expectant emotions, hunger for potential change, hope for the possible of the "See, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5), which he calls the "apocalyptic explosion."[100]

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[99] Ibid. 215, 219.
[100] Ibid. 221.

> The shapes which this process throws up, the ciphers, allegories and symbols in which it is so rich, *are all themselves still fragments, real fragments, through which process streams unclosed and advances dialectically to further fragmentary forms...* And therefore every artistic, and especially every religious pre-appearance is only concrete on the basis and to the extent that the fragmentary in the world ultimately presents the layer and the material for it to constitute itself as pre-appearance.[101]

Expectant Emotions

In the same manner as the fragmentary state of the world is sensed even as not yet conscious existential experience, the fragmentary appearance of images initially is grasped by the 'feeling mind.' Emotions as primary states of the self affect the reader/audience or observer as 'emotions of rejection' and 'emotions of inclination.'[102] For Bloch, hope, this most anticipatory counter-emotion against the horror caused by the fragmentary experienced in human life, is the rebellious force, which reaches out into the horizon of the 'Not-Yet-Become.' In this existential sense, the always-fragmentary picture can affect mental feelings, provoking the longing to envision and enact the completion of the fragmentary, to imagine the possibility of fulfilment. The fragment of the world analogously inherent in artistic pre-appearance evokes the Not-Yet as stimulus for anticipation of a future possible. This is hope for the Not-Yet-Being to become real.

[101] Ibid. 221-22.
[102] Ibid. 70-75.

Time and Space

In this account of the fragment of world and art, Bloch captures the moment of immediacy, in which past experience, present and future hope culminate. The image, characterized by condensed decisiveness, carries pre-appearance within, which, because of the fragmentary in art and the world, evokes the anticipation of future completion. The image captures the moment of mutual presence of past and future. Thus the fragmentary in art is a metaphor for world experience, in which pre-appearance as well as not-yet appearance create anticipatory consciousness or hope:

> the symbol-intention of the Absolute and Omega points to the darkness of the Alpha or nearest nearness. It is the source or beginning of the world, still driving and still hidden in the darkness of the lived moment, which grasps and dissolves itself for the first time in the signatures of its outflow.[103]

Time in this context is not perceived as succession of past, present and future but as essential time. As essential time, it receives its significance from the Not-Yet in history, which as Bloch says, "potentially contains the date of the completion of the world and the data of its content" causing the hunger to complete it to the Omega.[104] Accordingly, space, in the fragment-like image, becomes essential space, condensed to its opening, the abyss of possible non-fulfilment or Nothingness, as well as the vision of the absolute All. The objectified earthly reality of the visible image becomes essential space in its significance as metaphor for human identity.

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[103] Ibid. 303.
[104] Ibid. 308.

> The ultimate triumph of Nothing has been conceived mythologically as hell, ultimate triumph of the All as heaven: in reality *the All is itself nothing but identity of man who has come to himself with his world successfully achieved for him.*[105]

The account of "fragment" will be very useful for our analysis of the textual visuality in the Apocalypse, in which the text provides the artistic fragment of the world with its possibility for critical evaluation, possibility of change and vision of the ultimate All imagined on the abyss of Nothingness. As in visual arts, the book contains a fragment-like image of time and space, drawing its creative power from the dissatisfaction with the world, carrying within the promise of the Alpha of the beginning to become the Omega, which incites hope towards the future, the Absolute. It is this "fragmentary" character which actually serves as incentive to transcend the level of "photographic" reproduction, allowing the mind to venture out into dimensions that are not completely constrained within the boundaries of form and content, space and time. It is this "fragment-like" character of images, which particularly opens space for imagination, ideas, hope, space to search for new horizons of understanding.

Text

Yet in the Apocalypse we are not dealing with actual visual arts but "textualized visuality." The journey into the complex world of visual arts nevertheless offers important analogies for the study of the Apocalypse. The

[105] Ibid. 313.

realm into which the quest for visionary language leads is the realm of human imagination. Visualization in the text provides the link between language and understanding. The question is what model will suffice to analyse the visual dimension on the level of the text?

2.2. Metaphor as Model

A classic figure of language, which appears "fragment-like," is the metaphor. The classical metaphor, consisting of two analogous yet differing parts, draws its imaginative power precisely from the fact that it is a "cipher of the authentic," an open space of "unrounded immanence," which is not filled with appearance of closed form and content. In the metaphor, great art and language find their equivalent. [106] In fact, Bloch's "fragment," already served as model to explicate the evocative power of the visualized dimension in art here in this analysis. As with great visual arts, the "fragment-like" of the metaphor is a reference with particularly evocative power to incite imagination and thought. It is not an arrival at a defined space or time! Moreover, in analogy to visual art, the metaphor by its very nature does not allow for separation of its different parts. Essential for understanding is an encounter with the metaphor as composition, just as artwork should be seen as composition. On the level of

[106] Ibid. 219.

composition, contemporary research into metaphor in analogy to scientific models will provide an important link between textual visuality and metaphorical language.[107]

The "fragment" or "cipher" of an idea presented in great art, similar to a literary composition of an extended metaphor, connotes certain aspects of reality. Yet it also confronts the observer/reader with a void of the unseen and unsaid, which can provoke creative mental images about the possibilities of the unseen and unsaid. Unrealised actuality becomes a stimulus for renewal. Art or language becomes the medium for such a dynamic process. George Steiner applies Bloch's "grammar of constant renewal" to a general linguistic approach:

> *Language is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is.* Without that refusal, without the unceasing generation by the mind of 'counter -worlds'---- a generation which cannot be divorced from the grammar of counter-factual and optative forms ---- we would forever turn to the treadmill of the present. Reality would be (to use Wittgenstein's phrase in an illicit sense), 'all that is the case' and nothing more. Ours is the ability, the need, to gainsay or 'unsay' the world, to image and speak it otherwise.[108]

A textual image like that of the city in the book of Revelation presents an example of visionary language that stimulates attempts to "unsay the world, to image and speak it otherwise." Moreover, the metaphor provides a concept of language in which the compositional structure offers certain insights into the

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[107] J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* 1985.
[108] G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* 3d ed. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University 1998) 228.

"fragment-like" of language. The metaphor will serve as our methodological model for this investigation. This means the image of the city, as it appears in a composition of differing perspectives, connotations, associations and antithetical concepts in the book of Revelation, is essentially analysed as metaphorical network. This model will ultimately allow us to concentrate especially on the artistic-poetic and rhetorical dimensions of our image, which introduce us into, what Ricoeur calls "the work of imagination,"[109] produced through the metaphorical use of the image in our text. Yet before we arrive at the metaphorical dimension of our image, we need to establish an explanatory frame for the interpretation of our metaphor, to clarify the different analytic steps of this analysis.

During the last thirty years, metaphor has become an important scholarly battlefield for philosophers and linguists as well as anthropologists and psychologists and has attracted attention. Although very interesting insights have been made, there has not been mutual agreement among scholars regarding a model for metaphor. Thus, it will be necessary to briefly review some of the major scholarly contributions regarding metaphor to develop a working hypothesis for the purposes of this investigation, which will serve as methodological outline for the central part of this study.

Metaphor as Figure of Speech

Since antiquity, the phenomenon of the metaphor has puzzled and fascinated grammarians and philosophers of language. The classical theory,

[109] P. Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling," in *On Metaphor* S. Sacks ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago 1978).

originally developed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, classifies metaphor among the tropes as linguistic figure of speech.

> Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy... Metaphor by analogy means this: when B is to A as D is to C, then instead of B the poet will say D and B instead of D. And sometimes they add that to which the term supplanted by the metaphor is relative. ....Sometimes there is no word for some of the terms of the analogy but the metaphor can be used all the same. For instance, to scatter seed is to sow, but there is no word for the action of the sun in scattering its fire. Yet this has to the sunshine the same relation as sowing has to the seed, and so you have the phrase "sowing the god-created fire." Besides this another way of employing metaphor is to call a thing by the strange name and then to deny it some attribute of that name.[110]

Metaphor therefore initially rests on a way of speaking or writing, in which one noun, ὄνομα, is characterized in terms of another noun, ὄνομα, which is related to it by analogy.[111] This analogy signalises the fact that the two terms are in proximity to each other despite their distance. In his definition, Aristotle clearly attributes to metaphor the capacity to extend on meaning by classifying metaphor as phenomenon that names the unnamed by using a strange name and

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141-157.

[110] Aristot. *Poet.* 1457. Trans. W.H. Fyfe, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University 1932) Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

[111] The Greek word ὄνομα includes a close association between noun and naming and does exceed the grammatical category of noun. Aristotle uses it for word in the sense of literal term e.g. Aristot. *Poet.* 1457b. 4 also *Rh.* 1404b. 2. Greek and Hebrew fonts are according to M. S. Bushell *BWHEBB, BWGRKL* as published in *Bible Works* (Version 3.5. revised 12/19/96) [CD-Rom] (Big Fork: Hermeneutika 1992-97).

by denying some of its attributes. Aristotle's classification of metaphor as principal phenomenon of the name or word, as figure of speech, has been quite influential. In consequence, metaphor has traditionally been characterized as part of rhetorical technique and mostly been treated with the same suspicion that has overshadowed rhetoric in general.[112]

Throughout most of the centuries the discussion on metaphor has prominently centred on two topics:

1. Metaphor has been characterized as elliptical simile in which one word is substituted for another word.
2. Metaphor has been judged as adornment or decoration of speech, which contributes colour, vividness, and emotional force to language.

Consequently, in traditional accounts, reference in metaphorical statements is rarely attributed cognitive meaning beyond the elliptical simile. Aristotle's treatment of metaphor as a phenomenon of the word rather than the sentence or wider context has imposed important restrictions on theories about metaphor. Moreover, because metaphor has been ranked among the tropes, as figure of speech in classical rhetoric, the discussion of the language phenomenon has largely focused on criticism concerned with the persuasive power of metaphors.

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[112] The reassessment of metaphor therefore coincides with a new awareness of the importance of rhetoric, with particular focus on texts from the ancient Mediterranean world, in which rhetoric played a significant role. In recent years, the range of rhetorical analysis has advanced as investigative tool in the general framework of discourse, in which certain interest is placed on the function of rhetoric to persuade towards a certain decision. See P. F. Esler, *Galatians* (London: Routledge 1998) 14-21.

Metaphor as Rhetorical Tool

Suspicion about metaphor culminates among proto-Enlightenment and Enlightenment philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679 C.E.) and John Locke (1632-1704 C.E.) who contrast metaphorical language with the accuracy of philosophical modes of communication. According to these philosophers, the use of proper and common names should not be seduced by metaphorical language. Hobbes classifies metaphorical language as a way to abuse speech along with inconsistency of signification of words, lying and grieving another person with the tongue. According to Hobbes, human beings abuse speech "when they use words metaphorically; that is, in other sense than that they are ordained for; and thereby deceive others."[113] Thus, metaphor is denied any capacity to enhance understanding and is presented as antonym to unambiguous wording and philosophical thinking.

Modern theories on metaphor mostly reject these assumptions. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900 C.E.) in fact argues that all speaking is metaphorical. Yet this does not mean that criticism towards metaphorical language has become less aggressive. On the contrary, metaphor has not lost its embattled fascination among philosophers. Nietzsche poses a radical thesis: language as representation of truth is essentially an illusion:

> What therefore is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified,

[113] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan: or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* ed. M. Oakshott (New York/London: Collier-Macmillan 1962) 34. *Leviathan* was first published 1651. For an extended discussion on the questions resulting from classical accounts of metaphor see: J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* esp. 1-14; 67-96.

> metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding: truth are illusions of which one has forgotten that they *are* illusions;[114]

Nietzsche discloses one of the great dangers involved in metaphorical speaking, the possibility of referring to an illusion about reality. Metaphorical language thus becomes the great seducer leading away from truth. The question whether metaphorical language points towards truth or whether Nietzsche's "mobile army" merely represents an illusion leaves metaphorical speech at the abyss of "death" of religious and metaphysical thinking altogether.

While we will not be able to unravel this philosophical question here, the possibility of illusion, the possibility of fantasy, without reference to reality, nevertheless constitutes a serious question for metaphorical investigation, and in particular for an analysis of theological metaphors. If metaphor is seen not only as ornamental or as elliptical simile, does it denote reality beyond the proper name and word? Does the work of imagination refer to possible reality or illusion? Yet as Janet Martin Soskice rightly argues, this is not a specific problem of the phenomenon metaphor:

> if it is the case that our thought is directed by language (and in some sense this must be so), this is no less true of so-called literal language than it is of metaphorical....Even when we restrict ourselves to literal speech, we are by no means out of the danger of being misled by our categories.[115]

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[114] F. Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche* ed. G. Clive (New York: Mentor and Plume 1965) 508.
[115] J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* 82.

In other words, the question of truth is not a particular problem of the phenomenon metaphor but a problem connected with language in general.

Taking the argument a step further into the context of art, this same question reappears in the lively debate over the significance of visual arts and their impact on human consciousness. Throughout history, the metaphorical quality of visual arts has been a battlefield, with Plato as one of the foremost critics, who calls painting "imitation of a phantasm"[116] and emphatically warns of the dangers that lurk in the persuasive power of the picture as mere deceitful imitation of the real. The question remains whether the war over metaphor as reference to the world of illusion or visionary reality is not yet another aspect of Bloch's "fragmentary" with its tensional possibility for absolute Nothingness as well as the absolute All?

Metaphor as Conceptual Process

Within the previous discussion, the analysis of metaphor is largely taken out of the context of practical linguistics into the philosophy of language. Modern theories of metaphor are deliberately interested in metaphor as conceptual process, thus in the cognitive dimension of metaphorical language.

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[116] Plat. *Rep.* 598b-c. Trans. P. Shorey, LCL. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1969) Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000. Plato's treatment of painting in analogy to poetry in the *Republic* will be of particular interest in this study, since the discussion examines the role of poetry in the ideal city-state. For a discussion on Plato's theory of poetry in his works see: E. Asmis "Plato on poetic creativity" in: R. Kraut ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University 1992) 338-64; L. Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* Trans. G. Naddaf (Chicago/London: University of Chicago 1999).

The focus is on metaphor's ability to effect imagination and contribute to the cognitive meaning of a discourse; the focus is on metaphor as language event.

Concerning modern theories about metaphor several observations are of importance: Ivor A. Richards in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric,*[117] provides the reasoning for a contextual activity in which the two words interact and therefore produce the metaphor. His theory of "tenor" (subject) and "vehicle" (symbol) introduces two technical terms to distinguish the two "ideas" of any metaphor. According to Richards, the task is to compare the different relations of these two members of a metaphor. The theory brings metaphor back from its marginal place as "ornament or added power of language" into the centre of study as omnipresent principle of language, as "its constitutive form."[118]

Max Black, criticizing theories that primarily focus on comparison and substitution, argues that comprehension of a metaphor most of all rests on the fact that tenor and vehicle are not identical. The metaphor reorganizes and modifies the perception of the tenor and the vehicle. In other words, the composition of vehicle and tenor initiates a network of associations. Black's "interaction view" of metaphor directs attention towards the importance of the role of the context. Reflecting on the similarities between the use of a model and the use of metaphor as "distinctive mode of achieving insights" Black explicates:

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[117] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London, New York: Oxford University 1965, c1936) 96.
[118] Ibid. 90.

> A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other; the implications, suggestions, and supporting values entwined with the literal use of the metaphorical expression enable us to see a new subject matter in a new way. The extended meanings that result, the relations between initially disparate realms created, can neither be antecedently predicted nor subsequently paraphrased in prose. We can comment *upon* the metaphor, but the metaphor itself neither needs nor invites explanation and paraphrase. Metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight, not to be construed as an ornamental substitute for plain thought. [119]

Conceptual Metaphors

Soskice develops a metaphor theory in critical dialogue with scientific use of models providing insights into the cognitive dimension of metaphorical thought in relation to reality.[120] According to Soskice, metaphors and scientific models share an analogous characteristic. They do not depict reality in an absolute but partial sense. This reality depiction can serve as basis for projective hypotheses. The compositional structure of models provides a rationale that allows for modifying scientific theories. The proposition of hypotheses is based on structures that depict relationships yet not completely. The fact that these models lack exacting definitions provokes scientific imagination. Therefore, models function as incentives to "imagine" new connections. Metaphors, which provide linguistic conceptualisation for models, are called 'theory constitutive or conceptual metaphors.'

[119] M. Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca: Cornell University 1962) 236-37.
[120] J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* esp. 142-63.

Soskice argues that theory construction in scientific models functions analogously to metaphorical language in religious contexts:

> it is our suggestion that in the religious case as in the scientific one, although claims are made within a context of enquiry, this does not deprive them of their referential value.[121]

Metaphor in this context is understood as a model stimulating cognitive imaginative processes that are essential for the perception and exploration of theoretical accounts, ideas and concepts. As conceptual metaphors, these linguistic presentations can play an all-important role in the creation and understanding of concepts that provide essential ideas in human life.[122]

According to Soskice, metaphors in the context of religious language function in two ways:

a. They depict relations in a social context, with the community as referential basis.
b. They can partially open imaginative thought towards Absolute Reality.

In analogy to scientific models, religious metaphorical language is therefore to some extent dependent on realistic presuppositions, based on the community of interest, which are bound to traditions and assumptions common to the community.

> Descriptive language is forged in a particular context of investigation where there is agreement on matters such as what constitutes evidence, what are genuine arguments,

[121] Ibid.151.
[122] Ibid.102.

> what counts as facts...The realist position is not that we dispense with theoretical contexts or wider frameworks of assumption, but that the world informs our theory even though our theory may never adequately describe the world.[123]

For a text like the Apocalypse, the field of realistic presuppositions corresponds with the historical referential field of metaphor, which is the reference to shared human experience realized in human history. In addition, the fact that metaphorical language is "reality depicting, while at the same time acknowledging its inadequacy as description"[124] allows the metaphor to become a possible reference towards God, yet not in the sense of a definition. Religious metaphors do not provide definite knowledge. Metaphorical language, in connoting causal relations without claiming to be descriptive, thus offers possibilities in religious contexts to provoke imaginative thought in reference to Absolute Reality, in a biblical context to "God:"

> Our concern is with conceptual possibility rather than proof, and a demonstration that we may justly claim to speak of God without claiming to define him, and to do so by means of metaphor. Realism accommodates figurative speech which is reality depicting without claiming to be directly descriptive.[125]

While concern for conceptual possibility is important for scientific theoretical accounts, it is distinctive in theological language, which always is an attempt to say what cannot be said.

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[123] Ibid. 149.
[124] Ibid. 141.
[125] Ibid. 148.

According to our thesis, the image of the city in the Apocalypse needs to be analysed as comprehensive compositional structure. In this context, the textual visuality of our metaphor functions as model, as compositional structure characterized by its descriptive inadequacy. Using the model of visualized textuality, the metaphor of the city as textual composition corresponds to Bloch's idea of fragment in great art. In other words, the metaphor of the city is a model of a possible ideal city, for which the structural composition of the text with its historical referential field provides partial- reality depiction. However, this is not a descriptive definition of an ideal city but an incentive for thought and conceptualisation.

In her argument for a realist approach towards metaphor, Soskice deals with reference towards truth in metaphorical language. What requires further thought is the problem of how the "void," the lack of complete knowledge in metaphor actually becomes reference towards a transcendent in religion. Ricoeur in his life-long comprehensive quest for hermeneutic philosophy will provide distinct guidance in his deliberations about the "creative function" of metaphorical language.

Metaphorical Process

In his early work *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur attempts to show that the place for creative interaction in metaphor is not the word but rather the sentence.[126] In metaphor, interaction essentially originates from the copula "is"

[126] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto 1975) 65-100, 125-33, 247-56.

because the "is," which embraces "is" and "is not," creates "semantic impertinence" that leads the way to any reference:

> Metaphorical interpretation consists in transforming a self-defeating, sudden contradiction into a meaningful contradiction. It is this transformation which imposes on the word a sort of "twist." We are forced to give a new meaning to the word, an extension of meaning which allows it to *make* sense where a literal interpretation does not make sense. So metaphor appears as an answer to a certain inconsistency of the statement interpreted literally. We might call this inconsistency a "semantic impertinence,"...[127]

Ricoeur uses the word metaphor as paradigm for his literary theory of the "metaphorical process" expanding the concept from word to sentence and sentence to narrative, discourse and ultimately human action. According to Ricoeur, analysis of metaphors must incorporate two levels: the textual level and the dialogue between reader and text. The text, constituted through word, sentence and narrative, provides a contextual field in which a series of words interact. This interaction provides a primary referential field which, in dialogue with the reader, becomes an imaginative discovery of a reference. Ricoeur considers this dialogue to be "the basic presupposition of all dialectics considered,"[128] because the metaphoric function of language serves as a creative act, in which redescription of the world can become a principle of the world:

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[127] P. Ricoeur, "Biblical Hermeneutics" *Semeia* 4 (1975): 78.
[128] P. Ricoeur, " Reply to Mario J. Valdes" In: L. E. Hahn ed. *The Philosophy of P. Ricoeur* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court 1995) 282.

> The dialectic between the distanciation of the text and the reader's appropriation...constitutes the appropriate field for the dialectics treated abstractly....this is already the case with respect to the pertinence of the metaphorical expressions, in which deviance tests the reader's capacity for identification, understanding, and appropriation; the reader's mediation is even more directly implied in metaphorical reference, which operates only in the confrontation between the world of the text and the world of the reader..."[129]

Ricoeur speaks of the metaphorical process emerging from the complex dialogue between the world of the text and the world of the reader. In this dialogue, metaphorical tension can be located on three different levels: "the tension between the terms of the statement, the tension between literal and metaphorical interpretation, and the tension in the reference between is and is not."[130] This means, for any metaphor there must always be a "place of origin," namely a primary referential field which through metaphorical tension opens new referential fields as conceptual possibilities. What can be delineated with relatively certain confidence are criteria for this primary referential field, the place of origin. However, not any description of the primary referential field can ever fulfil the task of interpretation because the metaphor "lives" through its conceptual possibility. This brings us back to the most interesting fact about metaphor, which is its disposition to stimulate the reader or listener's imagination to see through a network of associations, new "horizons of meaning."

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[129] Ibid. 282.
[130] Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello. 298-99.

Interpretation is the search for explicating what is being-in- the-world as presented through the text. The theory of the metaphorical process is thus at the centre of Ricoeur's exploration into the socio-ethical dimensions, in which he extends the hermeneutic question from its primary historical and textual orientation towards a method for understanding "humanity" in reference to the text.[131] Metaphor, according to Riceour, is a dynamic concept, which produces diverse, possibly conflicting interpretations. It does not offer objective certainty or absolute knowledge; on the contrary, the concept leaves open possibilities, which are a creative and visionary act not restricted to the boundaries of worldly sensory experience.

Since it is not the task of metaphor to have a certain meaning, but to evoke meaningful perspectives, it is the teller, the audience or the reader who invests the metaphor with a message and particular inflection in one or another possible direction. In this sense, the tensional dynamic provocation of metaphorical language provides the stimulus for imagination as important link between text and understanding.

Metaphor and Imagination

According to Ricoeur, the realms of language and praxis are correlated through the concept of imagination. He explores the "pictorial dimension" or "iconic function of metaphor" as the link between semantic innovation and

[131] P. Ricoeur himself adopts the title "From Text to Action" for a collection of articles on the subject. P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics II* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University 1991).

imaginative practices. It is the visibility of discourse as ability to produce innovative concepts that is at the heart of the metaphorical process:

> "Remoteness" is preserved within "proximity." To see *the like* is to see the same in spite of and through the different. This tension between sameness and difference characterizes the logical structure of likeness. Imagination, accordingly, is the *ability* to produce new kinds by assimilation and to produce them not *above,* but in spite of and through the differences. Imagination is this stage in the production of genres where kinship has not reached the level of conceptual peace and rest but remains caught in the war between distance and proximity, between remoteness and nearness.[132]

Ricoeur thus attributes two important functions to imagination: the first one is a predicative act of assimilation, which is seeing the likeness in spite and through differences. The second function emerges from what he calls "suspension" or "moment of negativity" in metaphors. It is the act of creating a "reference built on the ruins of the direct reference," which is the source for the possibility of re-describing the world.[133]

Ricoeur's "pictorial dimension" in metaphor corresponds to Warnock's imaginative visualization of experienced data of the objective world by finding analogous relations. In other words, seeing the likeness in spite and through differences in metaphor is an act of creative imaginative visualization. This means finding order in the accumulation of words, phrases, sentences, associations and connotations of the text, transforming metaphorical fields into

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[132] P. Ricoeur, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination and Feeling" 147.
[133] Ibid.149-51.

mental images and concepts is an act of imaginative visualization that possibly becomes an objectified expression in art. The visibility of discourse or iconic presentation of metaphor as a creative act of imagination thus allows for the move from descriptive sense to reference. This theory, which outlines the pictorial dimension of the metaphorical process, will provide important insights for our own analysis of the metaphor of the city as textual image.

Metaphor and Poetic-Mythical Language

The "pictorial dimension" or "iconic function of metaphor" as all important link between text and understanding thus provides the crucial model to an interpretive approach that does not only recover primary historical and textual orientation but searches for the ontological discourse understanding of "humanity" in its actuality and potentiality in reference to the text. As Ricoeur points out, the metaphoric dimension is at the centre of any language mode that reaches towards existential dimensions in human life:

> In service to the poetic function, metaphor is that strategy of discourse by which language divests itself of its function of direct description in order to reach the mythical level where its function of discovery is set free. [134]

Metaphoricity[135] thus opens language to its "ontological exploration," which, according to Ricoeur, is a fundamental characteristic of myth.[136]

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[134] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello. 247.
[135] Ibid. 244.
[136] Exploring the symbolism of evil, Ricoeur explicitly refers to the following characteristics of mythic language. Myths embrace humanity in an ideal history;

2. 3. Working Hypothesis for Textual Visuality

In the case of comprehensive metaphors, which function analogously to artistic compositions, Ricoeur's "pictorial dimension" of the metaphor 'with its "suspension" or "moment of negativity"' also corresponds to Bloch's idea of the "fragment-like." Similar to the effectiveness of great art, the encounter with metaphors like the city in the Apocalypse becomes a provocation to imagine new horizons of thought and possibilities. The most interesting quality of metaphor is therefore the disposition to stimulate the reader/listener's imagination in order to see through a network of associations new "horizons of meaning." This account of metaphor has left the original definition as figure of speech way behind. What is explored among many modern theories about metaphor is the role metaphorical language plays as provocation for human thought and imagination. Yet while this describes the actual capacity of metaphor, the question is how to analyse and understand such a "capacity" in a framework of interpretation?

Metaphor as Textual Composition

As explained in modern discussions, metaphorical language is not limited to the classical figure of speech but especially works on the level of a sentence and can be expanded through clusters of "extended metaphors." The

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time becomes essential time, encompassing present, past and future, and myths signify the enigma of human existence between historical existence and essential being. *The Symbolism of Evil* Trans. E. Buchanan (Boston: Beacon 1967) 162-63.

significance of the sentence for reasoning the meaning of metaphors is a dominant theme in Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor.* Moreover, metaphors are not confined to a certain syntactic unit. The classical figure of speech rather serves as principal model in an analysis of extended metaphors or complex narrative structures. Using the analogy between models and metaphorical language Ricoeur concludes:

> First of all, what on the poetic side corresponds exactly to the model is not precisely what we have called 'the metaphorical statement,' that is, a short bit of discourse reduced most often to a sentence. Rather, as the model consists in a complex network of statements, its exact analogue would be the extended metaphor-tale, allegory.[137]

Consequently, required is the analysis of "a metaphoric universe as a network."[138] This is important for a textual image like the city in the Apocalypse, in which the extended metaphorical network can be used as model to explore narrative structures.

Illogical Logic

In her assessment of metaphorical theory, Soskice suggests that an important characteristic of metaphor is its ability to depict relations.[139] Soskice does not explore this characteristic of metaphors on the level of the text but investigates depiction of relations in a social context. Yet initially, in analogy to scientific models, metaphors can depict relations on the textual level as well.

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[137] P. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello. 243.
[138] Ibid. 243.
[139] J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* 133-37.

One of the qualities that distinguishes metaphorical language from symbols is the means of depicting relations. The composition of different words, sentences, and texts, is a constitutive part of any lively metaphor. In metaphor, the relation between the different parts plays an important role in the restructuring of the semantic field. As with the arrangement of the many elements, colours, shades and representations in visual arts, metaphors live as compositions.

Yet metaphors confront the reader/audience with a very special kind of composition. Distinctive for the composition is a kind of incongruity, a lack of harmony of the textual image. Our metaphor, the "woman…is the city" (Rev 17:18), certainly incorporates a moment of perplexity for the readers/audience. The composition consists of differing elements that are brought together in a very unconventional way. Lively metaphors therefore surprise, upset a harmonic reading/listening experience and force the readers/audience to come to terms with the unexpected in the textual image. The compositional structure of metaphor explodes language into the paradox of *illogical logic.* This paradox in language, as the fragment in great art, is the distinctive property of lively metaphors, in which metaphorical language opens up the space for speculative thought. An important task in this analysis will be to explore the relation between different elements of the extended narrative metaphor in the text to gain certain insight into the "moment of irritation" caused by the composition. In a structural analysis of the text, we will thus try to disclose important aspects of the logic as well as "unconventional" logic of the composition.

So far, our metaphor has predominantly been treated on the level of the text. However, as Soskice rightly points out, metaphors depict relations in a

linguistic community: "It is not words which refer, but speakers using words who refer."[140] Otherwise, the text would never be interpreted, but remain a collection of letters. Artistic expressions of the Apocalypse would not exist. Bloch's "fragment" would be without any reference in the world. Yet with the focus on human imagination, do metaphors, as incentives for differing possible interpretations, not leave any interpretive approach on the brink of destructive relativism?

Historical Context

To answer this question, we need to return to the initial observation that metaphors are interpreted in a historical context. The interpretation of metaphors is never dependent only on words and text. The linguistic community essentially contributes to any interpretation and human beings, as interpreters are always heirs to an established historical tradition. The readers/audiences are themselves participants in history, which they bring to the present reading. This means, interpretation of texts does not happen in a vacuum of pure textuality, but is shaped by the historic ideas and traditions the readers/audience brings to the text.

Conversely, if there is some level of understanding for a particular metaphor, picture or literary text, there has to be a certain amount of shared experience and common knowledge, otherwise there would not be any possible ways of understanding. We might for example select the famous metaphor "the woman whom you saw is the city" (Rev 17:18). This metaphor in itself would

[140] Ibid.136.

leave the reader/audience with an infinite variety of interpretive possibilities. For instance, there would not be any need to relate it to a biblical context and religious belief. The woman could refer to a stranger who was seen in the street yesterday; the city might as well be London, Budapest or any among numerous other cities in this world or possibly even outside of this world. While there certainly is still an abundance of interpretive possibilities, the context provides an important element for a reasoned argumentation about the metaphor.

This is why an artist can never completely change traditional patterns, because she/he risks the possibility that nobody will understand the work. Yet the artist might venture out in the limited tension between tradition and novelty to give her/his work a lively character. Analogously, for any metaphor there must always be a historically shaped referential field, which human beings seek to understand in an act of imaginative sympathy. Yet this referential field is not identical with the objectified historical facts and circumstances of the metaphor's initial origin. It is rather shaped by what we have so far called essential history, which means past events realized in their significance for humanity. Warnock rightly observes:

> All the time in seeking to reach human understanding, we are seeking to understand 'us', that is humans in the world. ...History is not just another story, with a beginning, a middle and an end. It is, on the contrary, a story with no end. We are in the middle of it; and whatever it cannot tell us, it can tell us something of how we got to be where we are. The function of imagination is to think about what is not in front of our eyes, and this includes thinking about non-existing things,...about future things which do not yet exist, and about past events which cannot be literally recovered. This last is history.[141]

[141] M. Warnock, *Imagination and Time* 107-8.

For interpretation to become an act of imagining horizons of possibilities there needs to be a search for marks of the place of origin as essential history. This is why Israel time and again remembers creation, the exodus, the covenant, and the exile. This is why the death and resurrection of the Lord is celebrated year after year in Christianity.

The historic dimension thus is explored by the reader/audience as an important field of associative perspectives, an act of seeing continuity and discontinuity, which is part of human understanding. Continuity and discontinuity are important correlates to evaluate the present as vision for the future. While this referential field includes historical data and facts, it most importantly includes ideas and value judgments. As Warnock points out:

> History is thus in an important sense always the history of ideas...The ideas, which are the concern of history include intentions; they also include attitudes and value-judgments; and such attitudes and value-judgments are what lie behind the events recorded in documents...[142]

The historical referential field of metaphor refers to shared human experience and shared human values and ideas, which the reader is able to observe and imagine sympathetically as part of historic experience realized in human history. We will call this the associative force of metaphor or its reference towards experienced reality including symbolic mediation of norms, customs, rules, values and beliefs. This encounter between the world of the text

[142] Ibid. 98-99.

and the world of the reader is embedded into a historical existence, in which the past is shaping the Not-Yet of the present as expectation towards the possible in future. The past thus is an essential part of the interpretation in which the metaphor, text or narrative is analysed for the present. As essential history, it fulfils "an all important link of continuity," and common understanding, which shapes any imaginative interpretation.[143]

This is also the answer to our concern about interpretation at the brink of destructive relativism. Interpretation is confined to the boundaries which are imposed by the very fact that the interpretive community is part of a shared history. Any interpretation that completely forsakes these boundaries risks becoming incomprehensible to human beings. History, including first century culture, values, and ideas as providing a sense of continuity and discontinuity with the past, is an essential part of any interpretation. It is particularly important for a visualized image like the city, which draws its evocative power from the tensional composition of past, present and future connotations. Thus, although not an interpretation in the classical historical-critical sense, our model of textual visuality is not proposed as a reading which posits the text as an autonomous literary world.

Evocative Power

A most interesting quality of metaphorical language is that it may become an incentive to explore possibilities beyond common understanding, knowledge and ideas. The search for similarities and dissimilarities in metaphor, the act of

[143] Ibid. 108.

"seeing like" includes a change of aspect, which ultimately gives birth to a new idea. While this interpretation originates from the encounter between reader/audience the text and the historical dimension, it receives its distinctiveness as new perspective through human imagination.[144] Moreover, in the encounter with the illogical logic of metaphors, this process of finding the significance of the text through an evaluation and ordering of past and present reality is also an incentive to imagine the future.

We might return to the analogy with visual arts to exemplify the importance of imagination. What the observer initially encounters in the picture are similarities and dissimilarities to what is known and common to one's own experienced world. This includes the heritage of historical tradition. This tradition partly shapes the interpretation of the picture, and makes it accessible to a wider audience with common understandings. After all, there is no interpretation possible completely beyond time and space. Yet an artistic image is quite different from photographs and reproductions. It represents certain colours, images, figurations but not a complete picture of a particular time and space in the world. To speak with Bloch, great art is "fragmentary," and this quality of the "fragment" becomes an incentive to imagine completion of the unfinished. The "bridge" for this work is imagination, which allows for a renewed visualization of the picture. In other words, what is not yet seen in art can be made visible as imagined image. Since the image represents part of

[144] Ibid. 108.

reality in time and space, the logical extension is the possibility of envisioning a new reality. The "bridge" of imagination leaps time insofar as representations refer to a different period than the present. It is also a "bridge" for space referring to a space beyond the immediate representation. Imagination thus begins the work of completion of the fragmentary, using similarity and dissimilarity as origin for new thoughts about time and space.

Metaphoricity of Myth

Mythic language, as scholars have pointed out, plays an important role in the Apocalypse.[145] In the context of this study, mythic narratives provide textuality for images as extended metaphorical network. As a working hypothesis, myth here is considered a language mode in which the focus is on the discordance between essential being and historical existence, in which time and space become references to essential history and cosmic universality.[146] In a process of textual visuality, the metaphoricity of myths can evoke imaginative thought that reaches towards the relation between the profane and what is considered the sacred.[147] In a text like the Apocalypse, mythic language provides a narrative model in which human existence in the present

[145] E.g. L. L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire* 5-7; also J. M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* 160-169 and A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation.*

[146] P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* Trans. E. Buchanan 163.

[147] Regarding the term "sacred" as expression for an ultimate reality that provides the substance of worldviews we follow scholars who explore the phenomenology of religion see e.g. Mircea Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion* Trans. R. Sheed (Cleveland: World Publishing 1968) esp. 1-37; 367-456 and Rudolph Otto whose definition of the scared as "mysterium tremendum et fascinans" emphasizes the numinous as well as rational aspect of the experience of the sacred. *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University 1958).

is experienced as rupture between essential being and historical existence. Yet this experience is absorbed in a universal future which, in a mythic sense, consumes the historical world and therefore, as visionary reality, can be incentive to re-evaluate past and present. Accordingly, mythological language in the Apocalypse is not only providing a script for a current worldview rooted in the past.[148] Metaphoricity in mythic narratives that emphasize future expectation can initiate a dynamic reader/audience response and ultimately provoke a utopian mode.[149] The analysis of mythical imagery here certainly builds on earlier scholarly works that have focused on the "relationship between the historical background of the Book of Revelation and its author's use of traditional mythological ideas."[150] Yet the current approach considerably differs in the sense that the emphasis is on the function of metaphoricity in mythological language, which holds the potential to stimulate imagination and evoke textualized visuality. This new approach also changes the perspective from the original author towards reader/audience response.

Utopia/Dystopia

[148] The cultural and sociological aspects of myth have been a particular emphasis in the work of functionalists in anthropology like e.g. Bronislaw Malinowski. "The Role of Myth in Life" in: *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth* ed. A. Dundes (Berkeley: University of California 1984) 193-206.Yet as Philip Esler rightly accentuates, theories of myth that focus on social stability cannot account for the dynamic visionary aspect presented in myths that speak of future events. *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* 100-101.

[149] For "utopian mode" see below.

[150] J. M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* 160. Also A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation.*

It has been our contention, that the historical past and the present shape the understanding and evaluation of the extended metaphor, text, narrative, while the future dimension is envisioned in an act of imagination for which a metaphor like the textual image of the city provides a significant incentive. Interpretation thus becomes an act of exploring new horizons. The evaluation of past and present, which opens new possibilities, Bloch calls "forward dream," the grammar of renewal, the vision of a new future:

> The concrete imagination and the imagery of its mediated anticipations are fermenting in the process of real life itself and are depicted in the concrete forward dream; anticipating elements are a component of reality itself. Thus the will towards utopia is entirely compatible with object based tendency, in fact is confirmed and at home with it.[151]

As vision of the possible, great art as well as the textual image can become incentives to action. The refusal to accept the past and the present in this world becomes inspiration to work on a renewal of the world for a better future. In this sense, the critical evaluation of reality and visionary exploration of horizons of possibility are essentially utopian modes.[152] However, as anticipatory mode utopia also implicitly holds the possibility of an imagined intolerable future or dystopia. To take reader/audience response to a text seriously includes that the metaphoricity of a textual image like the city can spur imagination to change the fragmentary of the world and to broaden the inadequate horizon of reality towards the possible into the Not-Yet of real

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[151] E. Bloch, *Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 197-98.
[152] Regarding an extended discussion on the concept of utopia see: B. Goodwin and K. Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia* (London: Hutchinson & Co. 1982).

possibilities. Utopia thus refers to "the imaginary project of another kind of society, of another reality, another world."[153] As imaginary projects utopia and its counter possibility, dystopia, can be critical incentives to reform current reality.

In the "textual image" of the city in the Apocalypse, the refusal to accept the "fragmentary" world is extended into a utopian mode that envisions the renewal of humanity under God's rule. The conceptual possibility of the "textual image" as language referring to human life thus is open towards the full realm of existential situations, the world and the cosmos. The metaphor can offer a "textual image," in which past, present, and future are perspectives towards a horizon that includes all possibilities. Ricoeur refers to this conceptual possibility of metaphor:

> "seeing as," which sums up the power of metaphor, could be the revealer of a "being as" on the deepest ontological level.[154]

Metaphoricity therefore denotes the intersection of the logical, semantic and imaginative modes, for which the ultimate referent is not the expression itself but a vision that, in imaginative mode, completes the void of the fragmentary picture towards a possible horizon. Accordingly, we will analyse the city in the book of Revelation as creative vision originating from a critical evaluation of reality including its dystopian dimension as referred to in the

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[153] P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics II* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University 1991) 319.
[154] P. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1 Trans. K. McLaughin, D. Pellauer (Chicago, London: University of Chicago 1983) xi.

textual image. Ultimately the task of imaginative completion of the fragmentary image of community/city through a vision of a new future community/city is given to the readers/audience of the apocalyptic text.

2.4. Plan for an Inquiry of the Metaphor of the City in the Apocalypse

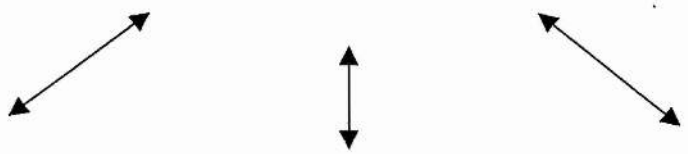
Throughout history, artistic expressions of the Apocalypse have produced eloquent evidence of the provocative power of this book to evoke images and thought. From the wealth of images appearing in this text the image of the city has been chosen in this analysis as one example for the dynamic spur to imagination and thought, which originates in the metaphorical qualities of the text.

In this study, the image of the city is analysed as an extended narrative metaphor in the Apocalypse. As textual parts Rev 2:1-3:22; 17:1-18:24; 21:1-22:5 have been chosen because the city appears most prominently throughout these chapters in the Apocalypse. The different textual parts together constitute the comprehensive textual image, the metaphor of the city. The way the metaphorical statement in a single metaphor works is therefore our paradigm for the complexity of an *extended metaphor*, which functions as an analogue to a

tale or mythic narrative.[155] Accordingly, the network of extended narrative metaphors, which as comprehensive textual network constitute the metaphor of the city, is the stimulus for the reader/audience to imagine a textual image of the city, to envision the heavenly Jerusalem. In the context, the different extended narrative metaphors all contribute in some way or another to that textual image.

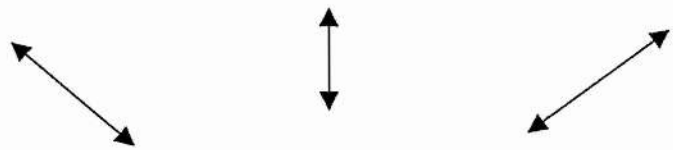
The City, the Great One, Babylon, the Harlot

(Rev 17:1-18:24)



Seven Communities ⟷ **Metaphor of the City** ⟷ **Seven Communities**

(Rev 2:1-3:22) **(Rev 2:1-3:22)**



The New Jerusalem, the Bride, God's Home among his People

(Rev 21:1-22:5)

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[155] P. Ricoeur considering the analogy between scientific models and metaphor concludes:

> what on the poetic side corresponds exactly to the model is not precisely what we have called the 'metaphorical statement,' that is, a short bit of discourse reduced most often to a sentence. Rather, as the model consists in a complex network of statements, its exact analogue would be the extended metaphor - tale or allegory...it is the poetic work as a whole, the poem, that projects a world.

The Rule of Metaphor Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello. 243.

Using the model of metaphor to analyse the idea of the city allows us to concentrate on the comprehensive textual image instead of following the linear reading of the text. Like an observer of a painting in a museum, who realizes the "interplay" of differing parts of a picture, we will follow the extended narrative, in which each passage is essential for comprehension of the textual image. The idea of community/city, as it appears in differing perspectives, colours and representations throughout the book of Revelation, will thus be analysed in analogy to one enormous textual image using the model of an extended or narrative metaphor. Our goal will be to consider this composition of associations, connotations, correlation, and antithetical concepts as a "fragment-like" artistic image.

Composition

Investigating the structural composition of our metaphor will be the first step in this application of our model of the textual image of the city. For any method of interpretation the text is a given. The text as it presents a way of looking at things, at the world, is a critically important criterion for any interpretive approach. In chapter three, the focus will therefore particularly be the composition of our "textual image" through an analysis and explanation of the structure and literary context of the image in the Apocalypse. This will introduce organizing principles and defining relations, which are important aspects of the artful presentation of the image-network. While the analysis of the composition will provide us with insight into the illogical logic or disharmonious construction of the metaphorical network, observations regarding formal aspects will provide

guidance for content and function of our metaphor. Overall, the analysis of compositional aspects of the text itself will provide preliminary guidance for a reasoned interpretation of the textual image.

Referential Dimension

According to our model, the textual motif-elements of our structural analysis not only denote relation on a level of the text but also depict reality in a social-historical context. This aspect will be the focus in our analysis of the "referential dimension of the metaphorical network." We will especially articulate important aspects concerning the associative force of metaphor, its reference towards experienced reality. Examined are symbolic denotations of norms, customs, rules, values and beliefs, which arise as associations from an encounter between the world of the text and the world of the reader. Based on our structural analysis of motif-threads: kingdom, the woman and death and life, we will thus explore possible referential perspectives for archaic-mythic concepts in the text that become references towards universal experiences of humanity.

Our particular interest here is in the possible associative force of well-established images, conveying concepts of human experience and existence which, as mythological images, are not necessarily constrained to cultural and historical boundaries. Amos N. Wilder highlights the important role and function archaic images play in apocalyptic language:

> Common to all true apocalyptic is a situation characterized by anomie, a loss of "world," or erosion of structures, psychic and cultural, with the consequent nakedness of Being or

> immediacy to the dynamics of our existence. Hence the rhetorics of this "panic" exposure in which all is at stake, involving antinomies of life and death, light and darkness, knowledge and nescience, order and chaos. And it can never be only a question of the individual. It is a juncture which renews the archaic crisis of all existence: that of survival, the viability of life. Since inherited structures are forfeit, the only available dramatizations of the crisis or of any projectable "future" will necessarily have a *precultural* character (in the sense of regression behind existing social conventions and symbolic patterns.) [156]

Mythological image thus will here be taken to mean a representative part of traditional mythological narratives, which by creative, imaginative means provides concepts of human experience and existence for a society in which they are told. We are interested in the often-fragmentary reappearance of these images in our text as well as possible associative characteristics resulting from the "remembering" of traditional images, which through analogies and associations enrich the metaphor. These traditional images thus provide an important aspect of the primary referential fields of the metaphor which, nevertheless, inevitably invest any telling with a special message. Wendy Doniger describes the process from text to message with respect to myth as follows:

> By choosing to tell one story rather than another, the teller is choosing to make one point rather than another. And, indeed, if we assume, as surely we must, that the myth in its earliest telling was made by a human with opinions about it, there was always a point of view. But we must always admit that the second telling might have expressed a different point of view. If there could be an experience devoid of telling, it would be possible to

[156] A. N. Wilder "The Rhetoric of Ancient and Modern Apocalyptic"

> say, "This happened," without saying why it happened, or what was the point of happening. But in actual practice we cannot have access to such untold experience. Although the experience itself has no ideology, no spin, every telling puts a spin on it- indeed, it puts several spins on it. [157]

Methodologically, we will again search for the references to mythological images, which as link to traditional ideas and value judgments, essentially shape and determine a common understanding of these motif-elements without imposing a predetermined meaning on the metaphor.

City Images: Plato and the Apocalypse

Investigating the metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation means we are dealing with an idea that has occupied curious minds throughout history. Plato's philosophical texts about the best or ideal city are among some of the most famous and best-preserved examples from antiquity. The reasoned argumentation of the Greek philosopher will introduce us to crucial questions about the best/ideal city, questions that are in the centre of our textual image as well. Utilizing Plato's discourse about the best city will allow us to focus on values and ideas as reflected in the philosophical reasoning of these texts. The overall goal is not to reconstruct the comprehensive historical situation of the

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Interpretation 25 (1971): 440-41.

[157] W. Doniger "Minimyths and Maximyths and Political Points of View" in: *Myth and Method* L. L. Patton and W. Doniger eds. (Charlottesville, London: University of Virginia Press 1996) 121.

While we will particularly consider aspects of the mythological images from texts of the Hebrew Bible, we need to refer the reader to some in depth studies concerning the appearing of mythological images in other cultures.

original reader/audience at the end of the first century C. E. in Asia Minor.[158] For that reason we refer the reader to more extended studies.[159] The objective is rather to conceive common characteristics of the idea of the city as they appear in texts from antiquity through a context of sameness and difference. Although the philosophical and biblical texts do not share the exact same cultural context, the comparison of similar concerns and points of view in such a "conversation" can illuminate significant aspects and clarify distinct perspectives regarding an idea like the best/heavenly city.[160]

In addition, since philosophical reasoning is a rather different linguistic mode from our textual image in the book of Revelation, the comparison with a philosophical context will provide us with an interesting point of reference for an exploration of the very distinct "iconic" mode of the textual image in the Apocalypse.

Rhetoric of the Metaphor

The quality of metaphor to open space for participation on the part of the audience/readers by means of imagination and poetic feeling also contributes to its rhetorical force. Aristotle places metaphor at the "intersection" of the

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[158] Among scholars this period and place is generally acknowledged to be the most likely one for the origin of the Apocalypse.

[159] E.g. A. Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis* (esp. 25-110) who presents a thorough investigation of the probable historical background. A comprehensive survey concerning a likely political-religious situation under Domitian is given by H. Giesen, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* 25-30. Extensive historical information is further provided in L. L. Thompson's analysis, *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire.*

[160] W. Doniger proposes the term "conversation" as method "to bring into a single (if not necessarily harmonious) conversation the genuinely different approaches that several cultures have made to similar (if not the same) human

Rhetorics and the *Poetics*, which attributes rhetorical as well as poetic functions to metaphor.[161] Since antiquity, rhetoric, as phenomenon of an intersubjective, dialogical dimension, has always been in danger of becoming a tool that provides the power for persuasion towards virtually any goal. Investigating the rhetorical dimension of the metaphor of the city confronts us with the task of evaluation of premises and presuppositions of the text.

The chosen topics of human geography, the woman and the politics of ideology and vision will introduce the persuasive power of the metaphor of the city to convince and motivate people for action in a given historical situation.[162] Historical differences in perception of a text between a reader/audience in antiquity and today will be part of a critical assessment of some important persuasive goals in the text.[163]

Metaphorical Imagination

The characteristic of metaphor to spur creative interpretation is an important aspect throughout this investigation. It will be the explicit subject in

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problems." W. Doniger, "The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth" *Religious Studies News* Abstract 12/1 (1997): 9.

[161] Aristot. *Poet.* 1457b ff *Rh.* 1405 ff.

[162] Ideology in the context will be analysed as part of a social or cultural sphere of ideas and conceptions, which provide order and legitimisation to preserve a system of authority. See P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action. Essays in Hermeneutics I* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson. 307-18.

[163] E. Schüssler Fiorenza draws particular attention to the fact that the difference in historical situations also influences the "rhetorical situation" of the text:

> What I am arguing here is that we should not reduce "the reader" to a timeless, ideal reader because in so doing we essentialize and dehistoricize the book. Rather than pose an abstract reader, we must detect and articulate our own presuppositions, emotions, and reactions to the work in an explicit way, as well as sort out what kind of quality of response becomes dominant in our own reading.

The Book of Revelation. Justice and Judgment 199.

the concluding chapter. According to our model of metaphor interpretation needs to be understood in the context of community. Interpretation is thus understood as a process emerging at the intersection between the world of the text, in our text the textual image of the city, and the world of the reader or audience. It is through the process of reading/listening that the text as imagined opens its metaphorical dimension and can become an incentive for hope, ideas, and practical possibility. As in visual arts, the images of the Apocalypse speak as complex textual compositions in which time and space are condensed to the moment of encounter with the observer. The metaphorical quality of the "fragment-like" textual image of the city, in which time and space appear partially denoting past and present, is investigated as powerful stimulus for imagination and capacity to envision a new future community. To speak with Bloch, the "fragment-like" aspects of the textual image of the city are examined as pointers provoking a heightened awareness for reality, which as not-yet completed reality opens space for creative visions of possible completion and fulfilment as future reality. As biblical metaphor, it can ultimately become inspiration to envision a transcendental horizon of community/city, a cipher of an ideal community called the "heavenly Jerusalem." This investigation of the image of the city will allow us to concentrate on the referential quality of mythic language, in which the "fragment-like" and compositional characteristics of the metaphor become inspiration for a new vision. The emphasis will be on imagination that freely can choose to reach out towards a horizon for which any attempt to force enclosure in language necessarily must fail.

I am entirely aware that this reading of the text, while guided by Jewish, Christian and Hellenistic traditions and the use of literary methods will

necessarily include my own socio-political and cultural perspectives as a woman living in a western society in the twenty first century.

3. The Composition

The rich imagery of the book of Revelation has always been a focus for literary, structural and theological investigations. Yet the complexity of correlated, contrasting, multifaceted images has so far perplexed many readers. The overall structure of the book of Revelation seems to have produced a continuous debate among scholars and there are a great variety of proposals. Following Günther Bornkamm, Adela Yarbro Collins and Edith Humphrey utilize the scrolls as basic structuring principle framed by the opening vision and judgment and salvation oracles and visions.[164] Schüssler Fiorenza in her analysis proposes a concentric symmetry as a structuring principle.[165] Other scholars, who focus more closely on the symbolism in their analysis of the book, still outline a kind of logical structure at the expense of some of the interconnected perspectives and images. Austin Farrer, although he compares the book to a tree with branches and emphasizes its unity of spiritual imagery, proposes the logical-linear structure of the half-week scheme.[166] Humphrey's conclusion on previous attempts to find a compositional structure for the book of Revelation characterizes the problem well:

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[164] G. Bornkamm, "Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis" *ZNW* 36 (1937): 132-49. E. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities. Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas,* 97-100. Regarding a survey of different structural analysis proposed, see A. Feuillet, *The Apocalypse* Trans. T. E. Crane (Staten Island: Alba House 1965) 23-36, also A. Läpple, *Die Apocalypse des Johannes* (München: Don Bosco 1966) 50-57.

[165] "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation" 362.

> The very number of suggestions witnesses to the frustration of scholars in adequately comprehending the piece. This frustration is also, it seems, expressed in two opposite attitudes: over-confidence regarding a new scheme as 'the key' to understanding, or a failure of nerve in some commentators seen in conspicuous lack of any outline at all.[167]

An important reason for this is rooted in the literary character of the book itself, which offers various clues for a certain symmetry and distinctive sections, yet its complex interplay of intertwined narrative and metaphoric devices[168] makes any analysis according to linear structural outlines almost impossible. The search for logical symmetry is often achieved at the expense of neglecting interrelated segments and images. While narrative language frequently follows a sequential movement of time and can usually be outlined as a logical-linear structure, this is not the case for metaphorical language and intertwined narratives, which are important literary devices frequently employed in this text. Schüssler Fiorenza rightly stresses: "the author does not divide the text into separate sections or parts, but joins units together... It is therefore more crucial to discern joints of the structure which interlace the different parts than to discover the 'dividing marks'."[169] In this sense, Thompson proposes the image of a stream with whorls, vortices, and eddies to capture the fluctuation of images, figures, reiterations, recursions, and contrasts of the language in the

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[166] *The Revelation of John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon 1964) 7-23.
[167] E. Humphrey, The Ladies and the Cities. Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas. 84.
[168] See L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire* 40-52.
[169] E. Schüssler Fiorenza "Composition and Structure of the Book of Revelation" *CBQ* 39 (1977): 173.

book of Revelation.[170] The question is whether not all of these "ordered" models are too limiting for the comprehensive composition of the text, whether the search should rather be for a kind of chaotic order?

Orality and Visuality

Scholars, who investigate the oral dimension of the Apocalypse, point to the fact that structural connections and allusions, which do not follow a particular systematic order, are important characteristics for the orality of a text. These rather indirect structural connections guide the audience, suggesting interconnected images and themes. In particular, change and variability of images are specific signs for oral language, techniques that support remembering and transmission of the message.[171] While these techniques, combined with repetitiveness and vivid imagery, not easily conform to common structuring principles, they nevertheless are likely to implement a lasting impression on the mind.[172] Moreover, variability and allusive interconnection serve as important characteristic for the visual dimension of the text, in which images provide the link between the chaos of interconnected antithetical motifs, scenes, and understanding. The wealth of artistic representations of the Apocalypse objectifies in pictures what is imagined in a dynamic process

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[170] See L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire* 52.

[171] W. H. Kelber in his analysis of the process of oral transmission in the New Testament stresses the socialization of oral speech as important reason for flexibility, change and improvisation of formulaic patterns of oral speech: "Variability and stability, conservatism and creativity, evanescence and unpredictability all mark the pattern of oral transmission."
The Oral and the Written Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress 1983) 33.

[172] D. L. Barr "The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment" *Int* 40 (1986): 243-256.

between the text and the readers/audience. Rosemary Muir-Wright, analysing a famous example of such artistic objectification, the *Douce Apocalypse*, reminds us of the important relation between visual and oral dimension in the Apocalypse:

> Light and sound are the directing forces in the interpretation of the Douce manuscript...The pictorial forms are set against the bare vellum which acts like an enveloping atmosphere of natural daylight reinforcing the immediacy of the narrative action and heightening the visionary episode by acting as a foil for the non-natural use of gold when used as a symbol for divine light. But the message of the Apocalypse is not exclusively visual. Its stress lies on sound, declamatory or evocative or, on occasion, inaudible.[173]

Illustrated manuscripts as the *Douce Apocalypse* certainly contradict Sweet's claim that the oral language does not need the pictorial dimension.[174] The oral presentation actually supports the process of forming mental images since the senses are not principally restricted to the linear reading of the text. In an oral reading, the mind is allowed considerably more freedom to create a comprehensive mental composition that resists absolute categorization. In other words, the audience imagines the comprehensive composition of textual images according to structural clues in the text, without the need to conform to a

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[173] R. Muir Wright, "Sound in pictured silence. The significance of writing in the illustration of the Douce Apocalypse" *Word & Image* 7/3 (1991): 240.

[174] J. P. M. Sweet, *Revelation* 14. Following T. Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* Trans. J. L. Moreau (Philadelphia: SCM 1960) Sweet claims "that Hebrew thought appealed to the ear rather than to the eye" 14. Yet, overall Sweet's conclusion results from a rather literal reading of the text which leads him to suggest that the visualization of images in the Apocalypse "would be grotesque...the sword issuing from his mouth (v.16), which has produced

textually enforced linear line. Considering that the text of the Apocalypse was generally read aloud at least until the fourteenth century, its disorder for the eye of the modern reader is most likely its distinctive characteristic as an oral text. The oral dimension stimulates the power to create images in the mind of the audience.[175] The link between the idea of the city and our text ultimately lies in the imaginative power of the reader/ listener, who "calls up the sense or significance" in the metaphor or the picture. [176]

The text thus provides the "factual components," in analogy to colours, lines, and materials of the picture. Yet the possible work of imagination starts when interrelations, contrasts and multifaceted images of a complex composition as the textual image of the city become mental images in context. To detect the structure of a certain image, to make sense of contrasts, similarities and connotations is part of understanding the metaphor. Accordingly, artistic renderings of the Apocalypse, such as Dürer's *Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit* [3] that I will now discuss, give an example of an objectified composition which function analogously to the mental pictures created according to the reading/hearing of the text. The unique order of graphic lines picturing various scenes thus provides a model allowing insight into structuring principles that are effective on the textual level of our metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation as well.

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rather unhappy results in Christian art" 70. Such photographic imaging however certainly does not consider the metaphoricity of images seriously.

[175] P. Saenger provides a comprehensive analysis of the tradition of oral reading and follows it into the transition from oral to visual reading in the medieval society. "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society." *Viator* 13 (1982): 367-414.

[176] M. Warnock, *Imagination* (Worcester/London: Trinity Press 1976) 171.

[3] A. Dürer, *The Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit*

(reduced)

Visualized Composition

In 1498, Dürer publishes a cycle of woodcuts about the Apocalypse. [177] The last plate [3] dramatizes the vision of the heavenly city as most extraordinary composition, in which the Not-Yet as the hope for the coming of the New Jerusalem is visualized as picture. In a certain sense, this woodcut is a remarkable example of Bloch's idea of the fragmentary in art visualized in a composition depicting partial-reality. The question for us here is, what means does the artist use to achieve this goal?

Striking is the way Dürer designs his image, using different scenes from the text as well as his own world of experience in a comprehensive composition. Visualized is the moment, the angel with the key to the bottomless pit is on the brink of seizing the dragon (Rev 20:1-3). In other words, the satanic forces are ready to be restrained, but the moment is not here yet. It is the anticipation of this moment that is provoked in the image, the hope for the end of misery, caused by evil. This anticipation is also nurtured by another scene. Above, from a hill, an angel shows John the heavenly city in the distance. John's face reveals signs of hopeful expectation. He can see the city of God; he can envision it, a city, which appears as medieval city in the distance. It is the city known to the artist, but for the city, the moment of transformation has not arrived yet. John, and with him those who perceive the image, have not reached the heavenly city. The distance between John and the city carries the whole weight of the apocalyptic tension between the dragon not seized yet and the anticipation of the possible transformed city, the arrival at the Yet. The distance carries the weight

[177] [3] Dürer, *The Apocalypse: The Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit* Woodcut, 392 x 283 mm. Prob. 1496 – 1497

of the world that has not reached its final transformation from worldly to heavenly community. The moment is in urgent waiting for the worldly city to become the new heavenly city.

It seems to me that the graphic lines used in Dürer's composition present a most striking example for a metaphor in art. Dürer brings together different scenes from the book of Revelation in one picture. The artist uses his own historical reality, without pretending to reflect absolute reality depiction. As partial-reality depiction, the image thus opens space for imagination. Moreover, the bizarre combination of different scenes from the Apocalypse, which creates a moment of surprise, a sense of incongruity, forces the observer to interpret the unconventional composition. In the language of the Apocalypse, the tension between the possible, the heavenly city and the Not-Yet of final destruction of evil, creates the illogical logic of the picture and inspires the anticipation of a new reality. The graphical lines, brought together as artistic composition, awake a distant memory of experienced reality, which causes unrest and hunger for the possibility of the Not-Yet to become Yet. Using the analogy between visual arts and our metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse, a structural analysis should follow the illogical logic of the comprehensive image, the composition, which as partial-reality depiction brings together the antinomy between heaven and earth, evil and ultimate completion.

3.1. Structural Analysis of the Composition of the Metaphorical Network

As an analysis of graphic lines and scenes offers insight into the composition of a picture, so does a structural analysis of the complex network of correlated, antithetical, associative motifs serve as an initial step in a study of a complex metaphorical network like the city in the book of Revelation. One vital step in our investigation of the metaphor of the city is thus the analysis of the composition of the metaphor, focusing on important points of intersection between the semantic fields. The analogy of a picture, chosen for this investigation, allows for considerably more freedom regarding an exploration of the artistic composition of the text than previous attempts to analyse the structure of the Apocalypse. As method for our analysis, we therefore propose a structural reading of the text, which does not necessarily follow any chain like organization of textual elements. In this structural reading, we will trace webs[178] of related motifs to emphasize correlating as well as contrasting elements in their entanglement. This analysis will also include important associative connotations of major images illustrated in the text or partial- reality-depicting references.

In analogy to compositional lines in a picture, a search for the illogical logic of the textual composition should reveal important aspects of our extended metaphor. We will use a structural analysis of the text to investigate important

[178] D. Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1979) 26.

points of intersection, which for the metaphor are points of tensive intersections, an *illogical* composition according to the standards of literal meaning. An investigation of interrelating as well as antithetical relations on a syntactical level is a first step to conceive constitutive aspects of the network's logic and artistic arrangement. The analysis of these intersections can only be a primary step in an investigation. The text certainly provides the foundation for a reader/audience response, yet the semantics of the words themselves and their arrangements do not provide our metaphor of the city. Metaphorical reference cannot be found in a dictionary, or on the drawing board. As the graphic lines cannot speak for the picture, the composition of the letters in a text itself does not create a metaphor. The diagrams that are inserted here are only fragmentary indicators towards a much more comprehensive web. Visual arts allows for greater illustrative variety yet still can never encapsulate an extended narrative metaphor like the city in the book of Revelation. As initial exploration, the diagrams and visual arts however should assist our exploration of a surprising, often absurd composition of metaphorical language, which notably is a source for the potential of the text to stimulate thought and imagination. The composition of textual relations provides the basic logic for our metaphor. However, to become a textual image of the city the realization of contextual interaction and reader response is constitutive.

Paradigmatic Reading

As structuring principle, we propose three differing webs of motifs, which feature prominently in the image-network of the city. Attention will also be given to associative connotations of these motifs. For this purpose, a

paradigmatic reading will be used to focus on the thematic elements, which are linked together, regardless of their location in the text. Paradigmatic reading in this context means a search for interconnected elements in the text, "a 'vertical' reading which does not follow any longer the linear, horizontal syntagmatic order of the text."[179] This *vertical* reading of structural correlating and contrasting elements of our motifs should sharpen awareness of a complex chaotic order and introduce a surprising variety of artful techniques utilized in our text. It is through these compositional interrelations throughout the textual image of the city that all the "contrasts between perspective and openness, designation and suggestion, imagery and significance, concreteness and plural signification"[180] create the referential domain of the metaphor.[181]

In the framework of this study, not all relations can be discussed with equal intensity. Instead, we have chosen three motifs, which picture significant themes in the textual image of the city. The chosen motifs are certainly not the only possible ones that could be analysed but have been selected because they offer recurring themes, which appear prominently throughout overall textual image of the city. As initial motif, the *kingdom* was chosen, a motif illustrating the question of power in the city. Secondly, the contours of the image of the *woman* are explored throughout the textual image depicting the role of humanity

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[179] Ibid. 26.

[180] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello 250.

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> ... there is no other way to do justice to the notion of metaphorical truth than to include the critical incision of the (literal) 'is not' within the ontological vehemence of the (metaphorical) 'is.' In doing so, the thesis merely draws the most extreme consequence of the theory of tension.

Ibid. 255.

in the context of the city. A third vertical reading is employed regarding the topics of *life* and *death*, motifs that provide key elements as incentives for visionary possibility.

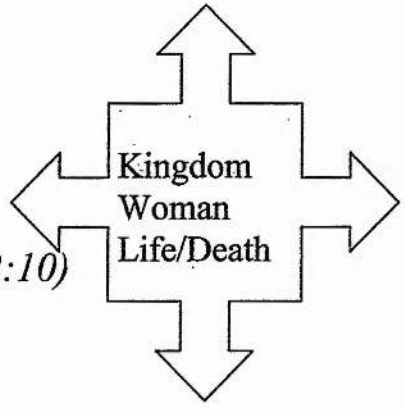
Motif Threads

Rev 17-18

The queen Babylon (Rev 18:7)
The woman is the city (Rev 17:18)
Babylon will never be found any more (Rev 18:21)

Rev 2:1-3:22

Satan's throne (Rev 2:13)
That woman Jezebel (Rev 2:20)
The book of life (Rev 3:5)
Be faithful up to your death (Rev 2:10)



Rev 2:1-3:22

A place with my father on his throne (Rev 3:21)
The tree of life (Rev 2:7)
Anyone who conquers shall not suffer injustice by the second death (Rev 2:11)

Rev 21:1-22:5

Home of God among human beings (Rev 21:3)
The bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev 21:9)
Death will not be any more (Rev 21:4)

Exploring the depiction of these motifs should unveil a comprehensive interactive network of diverse connotations, antithetical concepts and relations, providing a partial-reality depicting textual image, appearance that is fragmented appearance.[182] Analysing this textual image necessarily includes aspects of the social-historical context for our metaphorical composition. The goal in this structural analysis is to assist the search for concepts that shape the image-network as textual image of a proposed world, providing the basis for the cognitive and imaginative processes.[183] In other words, what we would like to achieve with our structural model is a reading that explores the textual composition and appearance in our metaphor as material providing a stimulus for an imaginative reader/audience response. Although this structural analysis is initially a formal reading, constructed according to the organization of segments in our text, references to shared human experiences to a considerable degree require imaginative thought. As Warnock points out, thinking about past events that cannot be literally recovered includes imaginative thought.[184] Accordingly, the search for partial-reality depicting references necessarily needs to leave behind the level of untainted formal reading to open the way for understanding of our metaphor.

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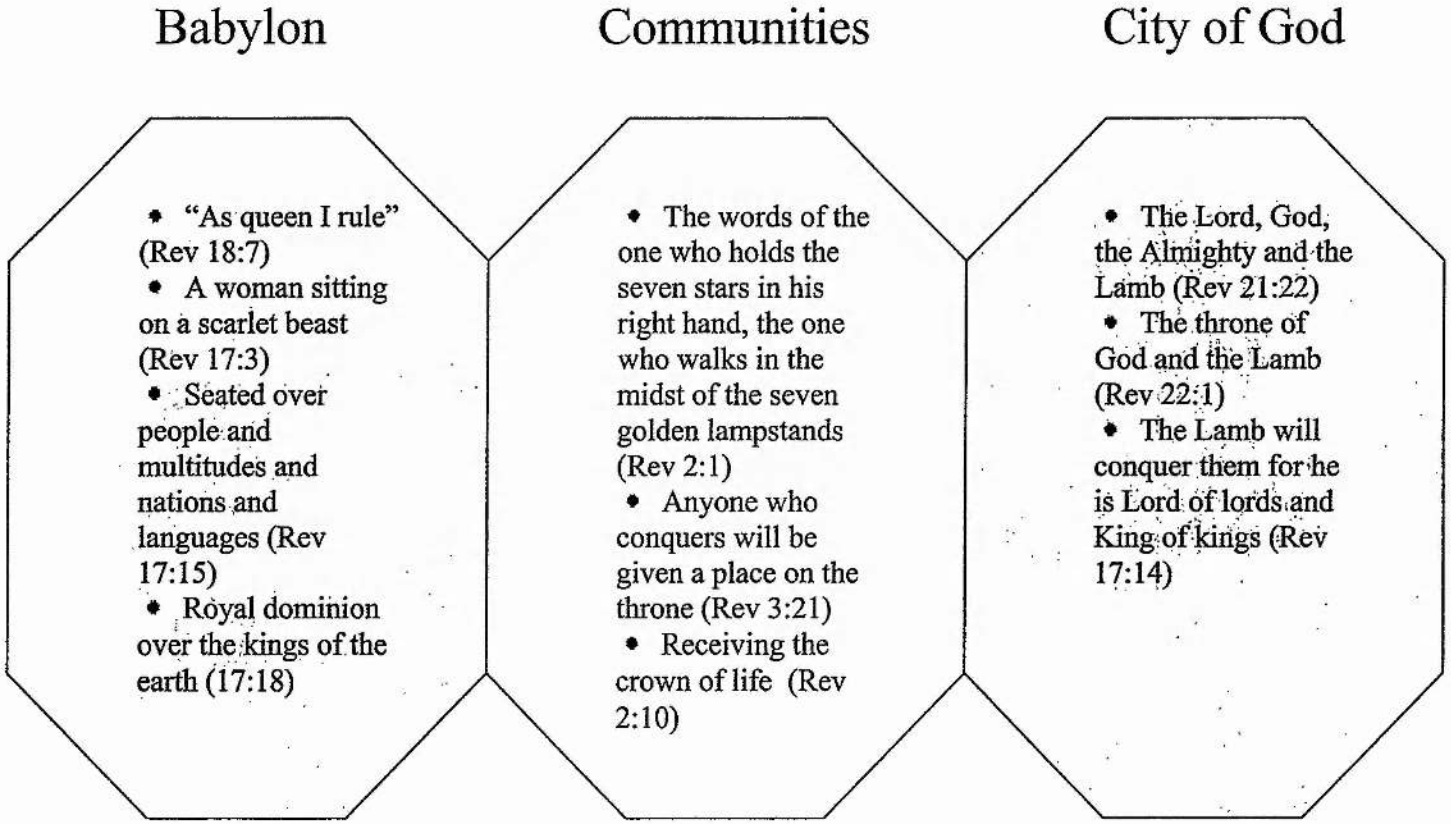
[182] J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* 148.
[183] P. Ricoeur, From *Text to Action Essays in Hermeneutics II.* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson.112-17.
[184] M. Warnock, *Time and Imagination* 108.

Kingdom


Babylon
Communities
City of God
• "As queen I rule" (Rev 18:7)
• A woman sitting on a scarlet beast (Rev 17:3)
• Seated over people and multitudes and nations and languages (Rev 17:15)
• Royal dominion over the kings of the earth (17:18)
• The words of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands (Rev 2:1)
• Anyone who conquers will be given a place on the throne (Rev 3:21)
• Receiving the crown of life (Rev 2:10)
• The Lord, God, the Almighty and the Lamb (Rev 21:22)
• The throne of God and the Lamb (Rev 22:1)
• The Lamb will conquer them for he is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 17:14)

3.1.1. Kingdom

An initial step in our exploration of the extended narrative metaphor of the city will be the analysis of the *kingdom* motif (ἡ βασιλεία), which provides principal colours and brushstrokes for the metaphorical composition of the textualized image. The comprehensive motif includes the related context of the king and queen and vital images like the throne, dominion, idolatry, priesthood, judge and conqueror. As in the visual appearance of a picture, the textual motif-network with its multiple connotations offers a comprehensive web of partial-reality depicting references, a compositional structure shaping the extended narrative metaphor. Exploring the motif-network of the kingdom allows insights into a wide variety of colours, shades, contrasts and correlations that illustrate the significance and quality of power in our metaphor. The motif includes the different dimensions of city/community encompassed in the text: the seven communities located in major cities in Asia Minor, the city Babylon and the heavenly city. Overall, the analysis of this exemplary web of interrelated topics will offer clues regarding the underlying logic of the textual image of the city, and its social-historical conceptualisations providing the material for textualized visual appearance. In addition, the investigation of the metaphorical structure, characterized by an unanticipated lack of harmony, will enhance the sensitivity for a bizarre composition that shatters effortless agreement with reality depiction for its readers/audience.

[4]

Lambeth Apocalypse, Ms. 209 fol. 1v.

"Vision of Christ and the Seven Lampstands"

Et vnus de. vii. angelis qui habebant phiales plenas septem plagis uenit et locutus est mecum dicens. Uenite ostendam tibi mulierem sponsam uxorem agni. Et abiit in spiritu in montem magnum et altum et ostendit mihi ciuitatem sanctam Hierusalem descendentem de celo a deo habentem claritatem dei. Et lumen eius simile lapidi pretioso tamquam lapidi iaspidis sicut crystallum. Et habebat muros magnos et altos habentes portas duodecim et in portis duodecim angelos et nomina inscripta que sunt nomina duodecim tribuum filiorum israel. Ab oriente portae tres et ab aquilone portae tres et a meridie portae tres et ab occidente portae tres. Et murus ciuitatis habens fundamenta duodecim et in ipsis duodecim nomina duodecim apostolorum agni. Et qui loquebatur mecum habebat mensuram arundineam auream ut metiretur ciuitatem et portas eius et murum eius. Et ciuitas in quadro posita est et longitudo eius tanta est quanta et latitudo. Et mensus est ciuitatem de harundine per stadia duodecim milia et longitudo et altitudo et latitudo eius aequalia sunt. Et mensus est murum eius centum quadraginta quattuor cubitorum mensura hominis quae est angeli. Et structura muri eius de lapide iaspide et ipsa ciuitas aurum mundum simile uitro mundo. Fundamenta muri ciuitatis omni lapide pretioso ornata. Fundamentum primum iaspis secundum saphirus tertium calcedonius quartum smaragdus quintum sardonix sextum sardius septimum chrysolitus octauum beryllus nonum topazius decimum chrysoprasus undecimum hyacinctus duodecimum amethistus. Et duodecim portae duodecim margaritae per singulas erant portae et platea ciuitatis aurum mundum tamquam uitrum perlucidum. Et templum non uidi in ea. Deus enim omnipotens templum illius est et agnus. Et ciuitas non eget sole neque luna ut luceant in ea. Nam claritas dei illuminauit eam et lucerna eius est agnus. Et ambulabunt gentes in lumine eius et reges terrae adducent gloriam suam et honorem in eam. Et portae eius non claudentur per diem nox enim non erit illic. Et adducent gloriam et honorem gentium in illam. Non introibit in eam aliquid coinquinatum et faciens abominationem et mendacium nisi qui scripti sunt in libro uitae agni. Et ostendit mihi fluuium aquae uitae splendidum tamquam crystallum procedentem de sede dei et agni. In medio plateae eius et ligni uitae ex utraque parte fluminis fructus duodecim per menses singulos reddens fructum suum. Et folia ligni ad sanitatem gentium. Et omne maledictum non erit amplius. Et sedes dei et agni in ea erunt. Et seruientes illi. Et uidebunt faciem eius et nomen eius in frontibus eorum. Et nox ultra non erit et non indigebunt lumine lucernae neque lumine solis quoniam dominus deus illuminabit illos et regnabunt in saecula saeculorum. Et dixit mihi. Haec sermones fidelissimi et uerissimi sunt. Et dominus deus spirituum prophetarum misit angelum suum ostendere seruis suis quae oportet fieri cito. Et ecce uenio cito. Beatus qui custodit uerba prophetiae libri huius. Et ego iohannes qui audio et uideo haec. Et postquam audiui et uidi cecidi ut adorarem ante pedes angeli qui haec mihi ostendebat. Et dicit mihi. Uide ne feceris conseruus tuus sum et fratrum tuorum prophetarum et eorum qui seruant sermones libri huius. Deum adora. Et dicit mihi. Ne signaueris sermones prophetiae libri huius. Tempus enim prope est. Qui nocet nocebit adhuc et qui in sordibus est sordescat adhuc et qui iustus est iustificetur adhuc et sanctus sanctificetur adhuc. Ecce uenio cito et merces mea mecum est reddere unicuique secundum opera sua. Ego sum alpha et omega primus et nouissimus principium et finis. Beati qui lauant stolas suas in sanguine agni ut sit potestas eorum in ligno uitae et per portas intrent in ciuitatem. Foris canes et uenefici et impudici et homicidae et idolis seruientes et omnis qui amat et facit mendacium. Ego iesus misi angelum meum testificari uobis haec in ecclesiis. Ego sum radix et genus dauid stella splendida matutina. Et spiritus et sponsa dicunt. Ueni. Et qui audit dicat. Ueni. Et qui sitit ueniat et qui uult accipiat aquam uitae gratis. Testificor enim omni audienti uerba prophetiae libri huius. Si quis apposuerit ad haec apponet deus super illum plagas scriptas in libro isto. Et si quis diminuerit de uerbis libri prophetiae huius auferet deus partem eius de libro uitae et de ciuitate sancta et de his quae scripta sunt in libro isto. Dicit qui testificatur haec. Etiam uenio cito. Amen. Uenias domine iesu. Gratia domini nostri iesu christi cum omnibus uobis. Amen.

Explicit liber apocalypsis.

Vision of Christ and the

Seven Lampstands

A striking composition illustrates the kingdom motif in the above miniature. The artist of the Lambeth Apocalypse creates a fantastic illustration of the kingdom-motif paying tribute to what one scholar has called the "almost surrealistic description of Jesus in 1:12-16" [4].[185] The one like a son of man appears as supreme king holding great authority over the seven communities in the Apocalypse (Rev 1:12-3:22).[186] The capacity of a visual depiction to combine different chronological settings essentially creates an illogical logic and thus is at the centre of the metaphoric dimension of the image. The miniature captures two different settings: the vision of the majesty of Christ seated on a throne, among the seven lampstands and the angel directing John to pass on the words of the one like a son of man to the seven communities in Asia Minor. Envisioned is the kingdom of God, a kingdom, in which the seven communities on earth are vital participants under Christ's rule. The majesty of Christ, clothed in a long robe and girded with a golden belt around his shoulders (Rev 1:13) dominates the whole composition. Gold, epitomizing the power of light captures the radiance of Christ's power, which is the power of God.[187] Gold embraces the

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[185] Seán Kealy, "At a Loss When Faced with Apocalyptic" 295.

[186] [4] Lambeth Palace Library. *The Lambeth Apocalypse,* Ms. 209. fol. 1v. (Library photo, with permission).

[187] U. Eco underscores the significance of light as metaphor for spiritual reality during the Middle Ages:

> Apart from single colours, however, philosophers and mystics alike were enthralled by luminosity in general, and by the sun's light. Medieval literature is filled with joyous acclaim of the effulgence of daylight and of fire....- the medievals often conceived of God in terms of light, and regarded light as the original metaphor for spiritual realities.

Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages. Trans. H. Bredin (New Haven/London: Yale University 1986) 46.

heavenly realm of the picture, a realm that reaches into the world of the seven communities. Moreover, Christ's sovereign power is visualized in distinctive signs attributed to the one like a son of man in the Apocalypse who appears amidst the seven lampstands (Rev 1:12; 2:1), the seven communities (1:20). The two-edged sword that rather bizarrely comes from his mouth (Rev 1:16; 2:12; 2:16), the flames from his eyes (Rev 1:14; 2:18) and the seven stars in his right hand (Rev 1:16; 2:1; 3:1) affirm his sovereign power. The book in his other hand holds the story of life and death (Rev 3:5; Rev 21:27), which is the story of the people in community, in the city. John receives this revelation and is given the assignment to proclaim the message to the seven communities (Rev 1:19). An angel from heaven links vision and word, with the gesture of the hands giving direction to the message from John to the seven communities. In this miniature, heaven and earth are joined through the one "like a son of man" who rules in authority. The composition of the miniature, consisting of various motifs and scenes from the text, forces the spectator to focus on royal power objectified as unique painting. The miniature sets the stage for the battle resulting from the antinomy of the two kingdoms in the Apocalypse, Babylon and the heavenly city. Christ's sovereignty, persuasively suggested in the Lambeth Apocalypse [4] by the artist, nevertheless is violently challenged in the context of our metaphor of the city.

The Queen Babylon

The antithesis between the heavenly city and the city Babylon is a focal point in our extended narrative metaphor. The tension between these two utterly incompatible cities surely dominates the textual image of the city and plays an

important role as powerful incentive for imaginative thought. In the context of two rival cities, the topic of supreme power is prominently depicted in the Apocalypse presenting the appearance of two antithetical kingdoms.

Reminiscences to the historical city Babylon associate her with glorious fame. The name Babylon with its monumental list of famous kings dating back to 2300 B.C.E., the once mighty capital of the Babylonian empire called "the glory of kingdoms" (Isa 13:19), doubtlessly suggests the royal character of the city. In the text, the royal claim becomes particularly evident in Babylon's declaration to be queen (Rev 18:7) and her pre-eminent power, which is vividly portrayed as "royal dominion over the kings of the earth" (βασιλείαν ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς) (Rev 17:18). The mighty on earth, the kings, are under her supreme control. Babylon's royal dominion extends over the ones who are powerful on earth and expands over people, multitudes, nations and languages (Rev 17:15). It appears to encompass the world! The purple and scarlet colours of her clothing signify her royalty as well as her adornments of gold, jewels and pearls (Rev 17:4).[188] Most notable is her portrayal as "sitting on a scarlet beast" (Rev 17:3), which relates her to the very character in the Apocalypse, which incorporates the authority and power to enter into the war with God and the Lamb. However, that she is holding royal dominion (ἔχουσα βασιλείαν) and seated over (καθημένην)[189] the nations, only seemingly proposes her royal character and authority. Her honourable status as queen is not unanimously

[188] See e.g. Dan 5:7,16, 29. Regarding scarlet and purple as connotation for power in the Greco-Roman Empire see: J. M. Court, *Myth and History in the Book of Revelation* 146-47.

[189] The word sitting (καθημένην) in this context relates to Rev 18:7 where it denotes the queen, as being enthroned in majesty.

recognized. Interestingly, she is never praised as queen by the nations, but acclaims herself to be queen (Rev 17:5 comp. Isa 47:1ff)! Her royal authority is worshipped by an exclusive group of people, the powerful on earth. When the hour of her judgment has come, only the kings, standing far off, and the merchants, who gained wealth from her, mourn the city's destruction (Rev 18:9-19)!

Babylon's claim for royal dominion is challenged in a most dramatic manner in the book of Revelation. The noble appearance of the woman clothed in purple, and scarlet, gold, jewellery, priceless stone, and pearls is disputed by her outrageous actions (Rev 17:4). Her title as queen is dishonoured through abysmal names that mark her as a dangerous woman. Called "the mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" (Rev 17:5), the accusation brought about in the title stigmatises her deceit in claiming royal status. The metaphorical composition illustrates Babylon's honour, which is dishonour in the eyes of the followers of God and the Lamb.[190] Evoking the biblical intertext, the charge of harlotry as symbol for idolatry and blasphemy is the most severe offence against God, the Almighty (e.g. Ezek 16:1 ff.). To be the harlot is to deny the heavenly kingdom, to deny the relationship between God and his people. Babylon, the great one, whose wine of her immoral passionate longing the nations have drunk and with whom the kings of the earth have committed immorality (Rev 18:3), undoubtedly offers a most impressive representation of misuse of power in the Old Testament. Babylon as harlot offends the only powerful, God, the Almighty,

[190] Regarding the role of honour and shame in the first century Mediterranean society see: B. Malina and J. H. Neyrey "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World" in: J. H. Neyrey (ed.) *The Social World of Luke-Acts* (Peabody: Hendrickson 1991) 25-46.

the Alpha and Omega! Yet Babylon is not any harlot, since she is called "mother of harlot's and earth's abominations" a title, which stigmatises her as the source for most horrific deeds on earth. She presents the corruption of even something as vital as motherhood.

Her appearance as Babylon, the great one, considerably relies on luxury and wealth (Rev 18:3) and is enhanced through her relation with the powerful on earth (e.g.17:2) and her alliance with the beast (e.g. 17:3). Ironically, the kings and the beast are finally the ones who will destroy her: they "will hate the harlot and bring about her ruin and nakedness, and they will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire" (Rev 17:16). In her self-glorification however, she does not even realize how close she is to her own destruction (Rev 18:7) and the ruination of those who have committed fornication with her and have grown rich with her (Rev 18:3, 9-19). Babylon's claim to be queen (Rev 18:7) actually characterizes most poignantly her idle self-glorification. The Greek word for queen, βασίλισσα, connotes a female ruler with authority over her domain. Yet according to common practices in Israel and Judah, the king's favourite wife was not given a special title or position. The queen of Heaven, an astral deity worshipped by Jewish families, is denounced by Jeremiah (Jer 7:18 et. al.). The identification of Babylon as queen drastically portrays her own self-glorification as goddess. In a quite contrary way, the city Jerusalem does not appear personalized as queen in the Apocalypse. She does not strive for alliances with the powerful on earth but engages in a different relation with the Lamb, the Son of God (Rev 2:18).

Jezebel

In this context, Jezebel, the prophetess who teaches in one of the seven communities, Thyatira (Rev 2:20-23) plays an interesting role as well. The name Jezebel brings to mind reminiscences of 1 Kgs 21:1-29, to the wife of Ahab, who provoked the people of Israel and Judah to follow idolatry, the notorious woman who is scandalously known for her sorcery practices (2 Kgs 9:22). The name Jezebel associates the woman who calls "herself a prophetess" (Rev 2:20), with the wife of Ahab, the deceitful queen who, according to 1 Kgs 21:1-29, spared no means to lead the people astray and maintain idolatry in Israel. Through a deliberate choice of naming, a member of the community in Thyatira thus is associated with the infamous wife of Ahab, a woman whose accusations resonate with Babylon's blasphemous deeds, sorcery and outrageous claim for royal power as queen. Jezebel, who misleads members of the community in Thyatira into idolatry, and immorality, embodies qualities that characterize the wife of Ahab as well as Babylon.[191] The name Jezebel prepares the scene for the power struggle between Babylon and the heavenly city in the context of Christian communities. Partial-reality depicting reminiscences to biblical texts bestow a cosmic perspective on events among the members in Thyatira. In the textual image of the city, Babylon and Jezebel become a warning signal that any community whose members deviate from Christian values, whose members contest God as Lord, the Almighty, will become Babylon

[191] Regarding the deviant role of Jezebel who is indirectly accused of sorcery in the context of the Christian community in the first century, see P. F. Esler, *The First Christians In Their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* 131-46.

God's Royal Authority

Surely, God's absolute royal authority and his supreme kingdom bring to mind a different scene. In a theophany oracle (Rev 21:3-7), God speaks from his throne: "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the fulfilment" (Rev 21:6). God's all embracing power not only enfolds the earthly realms, but includes the cosmos and the universe from its beginning to its end. It extends beyond the dimensions known to the human mind.

Most elaborately this sovereignty becomes manifest in wordplays including antithetical references and associations utilizing the motif of the *throne* in our text. The word throne provides perspectives on the possibilities of abuse or use of power in the city. As the artist of the Lambeth Apocalypse uses the symbol of the throne effectively in the miniature [4] to illustrate Christ's royal authority, so does the author of the book of Revelation skilfully exploit connotations of the word throne. The throne traditionally conveys the idea of kingship, dominion and authority. Since Israelite kingship essentially was to mirror the rule of God, throne in this context associates a rule of mercy, justice and righteousness (e.g. Isa 16:5). It is not only a kingdom reserved for kings and merchants but also a place where the ones, who are living like a beggar (Rev 2:9), who suffer and endure patiently (Rev 2:19) are an integral part of the community. As followers of the Lamb, they take part in God's kingdom. God's rule truly includes the nations (Rev 21:24-6).

The power executed by God and the Lamb stands in strong contrast to the violent rule, brought forth from the throne and the kingdom (e.g. Rev 16:10) of the beast, upon which the queen, Babylon sits (Rev 17:3). The throne is a vibrant symbol for the powerful worldly rulers, whose claim to absolute corrupt

power has often been a vital part in the destruction of communities on earth. The community in Pergamum is warned of the dangers lurking behind the throne of Satan and to hold fast to the name of the one who truly deserves to claim the throne, Christ, the Lamb who is sharing the throne with his father (Rev 22:3 at al.). To the ones who conquer is given the promise of sharing the throne (Rev 3:21), a throne visualized in the Lambeth Apocalypse [4] as the throne of the majestic Christ, who is the Lamb, the Lord of lords, the King of kings (Rev 17:14). Antithetical claims for power intrinsically joined in the textual composition provide disconcerting moments of surprise for the reader/audience of the text. The symbol of the throne in the Apocalypse conveys a fascinating variety of possibilities of the use or abuse of power in the city, which set the stage for an imaginative reader/audience response.

The Lamb, the Lord of lords, the King of kings

The Lamb (ἀρνίον), as most frequent denomination for Jesus in the book of Revelation, assumes the biblical intertext. Very likely associations of this title derive from Isa 53:7, a text which values absolute defencelessness and humiliation as strength before God. Brought to mind is the metaphor of Jesus as the Paschal Lamb of the new covenant (1 Cor 5:7) in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14, 12:11) that had been slaughtered (Rev 5:6; 13:8 et al.). Royalty in this context refers to the Lamb, humiliated and defenceless, the Lamb sharing the throne with God, the Almighty (Rev 22:1 et al.). As the artist of the Lambeth Apocalypse [4] visually emphasizes in the miniature, Christ's authority is all embracing, characterized in a series of epithets attributed to Jesus envisioned by John and reclaimed throughout the introduction to the seven proclamations.

Christ is the one who holds physical and spiritual authority over the seven communities (Rev 2:1, 3:2) through his judging word (Rev 2:12), his power to destroy (Rev 2:18) and his ultimate power over life and death (Rev 2:8). He is the one who holds power and authority over the key of David and allows access to the kingdom of God (Rev 3:7). Yet as king he is the Lamb, the witness[192] to God, "the faithful and true one, the beginning of God's creation" (Rev 3:14) holding royal authority.

The epithets given to Jesus in the proclamations illustrate the power and authority of the Son of God who shares the throne with God, the Almighty.[193] Yet the claim for powerful royal authority is given a quite uncommon dimension with the title: "Lamb." The Lamb, who is sharing the throne and the heavenly city with his father (Rev 22:3 etc.), is an extremely bizarre image, a most unfamiliar picture considering the historical context of the Greco-Roman society where sovereignty was surely not characterized by vulnerability and dishonour! The Lamb on the throne textually pictures the non-standard, the belief that a life of humiliation, a defenceless death, ultimately reaches resurrection, and conquers the throne in the heavenly city. The metaphorical language sharpens awareness for unanticipated reality: the decisive victory of the Lamb. Not more

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[192] The word witness means telling what one believes even if the consequences can be death (also Rev 2:13).

[193] The word "proclamations" has been chosen because this term is used for prophetic preaching (e.g. Jer 2:2) as well as public announcement of a royal edict (Esth 1:20; 2:8) which both are possible characteristic models for Rev 2-3. See G. L. Knapp, "Proclaim; (Make) Proclamation" in: G. W. Bromiley ed. et. al. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans rev.1988) vol. 3 (977-78). D. E. Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)," *NTS* 36 (1990): 182-204.

strikingly could this reality be pictured as in Rev 17:14: "They [the kings and the beast] will fight with the Lamb and the Lamb will conquer them for he is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev 17:14). The great authority and power of the one like a son of man, his strength to conquer resides in the absolute defencelessness of the Lamb that has been slaughtered.

Proclamations to the Communities (Rev 2:1-3:22)

In a miniature like folio 1 of the Lambeth Apocalypse [4] the vital role of the seven communities in the contest over royal authority is visualized in a comprehensive composition, in which different narrative scenes are conceived in one picture. The artist composes the scene similarly to our textual image in the Apocalypse, in which heaven and earth meet and humanity participates in the overall war for the kingdom of heaven. For an analysis of compositional characteristics, the literary style of the proclamations can offer guidance. The artistic textual composition of our metaphor sets the stage for an imaginative reader/audience response, in which worldly experience resonates with the textual image of the city.

David Aune convincingly argues for the important influence of popular concepts about Roman imperial court ceremonial on the image of Christ, the king, in the book of Revelation.[194] For a reader/audience in the Greco-Roman world, the various epithets ascribed to the Son of God most likely were evocative of the authority of the Roman emperor. Formal elements and patterns

[194] D. E. Aune, "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John" *BR* 28 (1983): 5-26.

in the seven proclamations also suggest an analogy to royal court ceremonies and the proclamation of royal edicts. In antiquity, edicts were part of the so-called *constitutiones*, which included imperial law as well as actual judicial decisions (*decreta, rescripta).* In the Greco-Roman world, edicts exhibited the typical form for public announcements of policies and laws pronounced by the emperor or higher magistrates. This resemblance to official edicts corresponds well with the overall image of the city. The text resonates with life experience in the Greco-Roman world. The proclamations addressed to members in communities suggest a situation in which official legal directives of the emperor or the higher magistrates are given to the people. In the words of the Apocalypse, "the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands" (Rev 2:1) speaks to the communities with royal authority.

Aune, elaborating on Gunnar Rundberg's[195] observations regarding Rev 2-3, has meticulously analysed the close formal resemblance of the seven proclamations to royal or imperial edicts, including *praescriptio, narratio, dispositio, and sanctio.*[196] The τάδε *λέγει*[197] (the words of the one), which immediately follows the command to write in the introduction, is an archaism

[195] Gunnar Rundberg uses similar characteristics between a stone-copy of a royal edict granted by Darieos I and the proclamations to the seven communities to demonstrate close resemblance of the pronouncements. He argues that the features of royal edicts serve as appropriate form for Christ as King addressing the seven communities. "Zu den Sendschreiben der Johannes-Apocalypse" *Eranos* 11 (1911): 170-79.

[196] D. E. Aune, "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Letters (Revelation 2-3)" 1.

[197] The neuter plural accusative form of the demonstrative pronoun ὅδε is an archaic form, rarely used in Koine Greek; see R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* vol. I 48.

used to emphasize the authority of the one speaking. It can frequently be found as introductory formula in royal decrees issued by Persian kings and Greco-Roman magistrates.[198] In royal decrees it functions analogously to the very common Greek *léγει* or *λέγουσιν* and the Latin *dicit or dicunt* (he says, declares; they say, declare) and indicates a formal style for proclaiming orders.[199] The stylised introduction to the proclamations, therefore, corresponds well with the function of the *preascriptio* in royal decrees, which attests and validates the authority of the one issuing the edict.

The following portrayals of each community introduced by the recurring οἶδα (I know) feature characteristics of a *narratio* in royal or empirical edicts. The *narratio* offers a description of the conduct of the members of the communities from the perspective of the authoritative speaker. The *dispositio* follows as consequential directives resulting from the portrayal of the communities in the *narratio.* This section is not marked by a certain formula and varies according to the content of its message (Rev 2:5-6,10, 16, 22-25; 3:3-4, 9-11, 16-20). The concluding formula for each proclamation ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω / τῷ νικῶντι / ὁ νικῶν (anyone who has an ear/to anyone who conquers/anyone who conquers) introduces a promise designed to justify the whole proclamation. The resemblance to royal edicts associates the proclamations with the announcement of an official, authoritative legal document, which pronounces the legal directive of the ruler. This resemblance to official edicts intrinsically links the proclamations with the overall topic of the kingdom. It strongly suggests the universal community perspective, in which the seven proclamations

[198] Art. ὅδε, BAGD 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago 1979) 553.
[199] Art. λέγω, BAGD 469.8.c.

are an integral part of the textual image of the city. Moreover, the historical context resonates with the text and sets the stage for visualized appropriation.

Yet the speaker is not characterized as any worldly leader; his authority resides in God! The image shifts the perspective from the worldly to the heavenly realm. Particularly for an audience or reader familiar with Old Testament tradition, the τάδε λέγει formula must have been associative of introductions to prophetic speeches (Isa 56:1; Ezek 45:9 et. al.).[200] The proclamations are notably reminiscent of prophetic messages. The speaker is identified as the one, who holds absolute authority, surpassing any worldly authority; he is the Son of God. The various epithets, attributed to the speaker, warrant the message as divine message. No greater validity could be given to the one who speaks with authority, no greater validity to the content of the proclamations. The resemblance to prophetic speeches implies a divine message, an authoritative royal edict as directive for the kingdom of God. As "God's law" and "commandments," the proclamations are superior to statements of any worldly authority. In the context of the metaphor of the city, the proclamations

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[200] Many scholars have marked the prophetic character of the seven proclamations. So e.g. F. Hahn, who concludes that the proclamations are typical prophetic messages:

> ...daß die Sendschreiben insgesamt als typisch prophetische Gattung anzusprechen sind. Hier verbindet sich innerhalb eines Botenspruchs die Botenformel mit einem prophetischen Mahn- und Offenbarungswort sowie mit einer Aufforderung zum rechten Hören und dem damit verknüpften Überwindungsspruch.

"Die Sendschreiben der Johannesapocalypse: Ein Beitrag zur Bestimmung prophetischer Redeformen," in *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seinerUmwelt* J. Jeremias, H. W. Kuhn and H. Stegemann eds. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1971) 391. Also U. B. Müller, "Literarische und formgeschichtliche Bestimmung der Apocalypse des Johannes als ein Zeugnis frühchristlicher Apokalyptik," *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* D. Hellholm ed.(Tübingen: J. C. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1983) 47-

present divine directives to individual members who, as a community of human beings, constitute the city. Heaven and earth are part of a dramatic textual visualization of the city.

Contest over Divine Power

The proclamations are authoritative directives, in which the possibility of failure to create an ideal city as well as the rewards of the heavenly Jerusalem are presented as potential choices for the members of the communities. Therefore, they are closely linked with the motif-network of the kingdom in our textual image. Only in the context of our narrative metaphor, which juxtaposes community life with antithetical rival claims for supreme royal power, does the admonition to conquer become understandable. In our metaphor, the antithesis between Babylon and the heavenly kingdom leaves the members of the communities, ultimately the readers/audience, with the choice of a kingdom. This is why "whoever conquers" (Rev 2:7 et. al.), whoever is called, chosen and faithful (Rev 17:14) is also part of God's kingdom.

In this sense, the antithesis between Babylon and the heavenly city plays a vital role in our metaphor of the city setting the stage for the contest over divine power in a deliberate play on the characters representing royal dominion. The textual composition allows us to take into consideration different levels of dominance for the city. On one level, the structure reveals Babylon's claim to be queen, a glamorous woman at the zenith of her supremacy challenging the power of God and the Lamb. On a second level, it is apparent that Babylon's

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104; D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1983) 275-79.

royal claim relies on unfounded self-glorification, wealth, and her power over the kings of the earth. As becomes evident in Rev 18:1-24, her sovereignty cannot bring about ultimate triumph in the cosmic perspective of the Apocalypse. Failure and destruction will be the queen's fate. Ultimate possibility, victory belongs to the rule of the Lamb, sitting on the throne with God.

In the composition of our textual image, these antithetical claims to power appear in the context of the communities in Asia Minor. The queen Babylon and the Lamb are not abstract entities; they are colourful brushstrokes that represent possibilities for the members of the communities. As the inhabitants of community/city/kingdom, the people are part of this network of power. They are called to decide between authority and acclaimed kingship/kingdom of the beast and the queen Babylon and the kingship of God and the Lamb. Yet this task is considerably more difficult than it might appear at first, since startling appearance and seemingly equal claims for authority obscure the real identity of the two kingdoms. The queen Babylon will always find her followers; for the world, her name is "mystery" (Rev 17:5 also 17:7). Her name of mystery alerts the reader/audience to the fact that it is not always easy to distinguish between a truthful and false royal claim.

The mystery of the woman

The Greek term μυστήριον (*mystery*) is a technical term in prophetic, apocalyptic, sometimes Greco-Roman context, which refers to the revelation of

a divine secret.[201] It introduces a revelation of special insight made known to the prophet, the disclosure of a divinely concealed message: "And seeing her I wondered with great admiration. But the angel said to me, 'Why do you wonder with great admiration? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and the beast that supports her and that holds seven heads and ten horns'" (Rev 17:6b-7). Scholars have offered many explanations for the "name of mystery"[202] in the text. Very often the debate focuses on the identity of the seven heads and ten horns of the beast, while it is rarely interpreted as a key introductory formula for the entirety of the following oracle (Rev 17:7-18).[203] The text directly preceding the *mystery formula* describes the appearance of the great harlot. Even for the prophet, John, it is impossible to understand the name of mystery without God's revelation. The city's real character is hidden behind her wealth, greatness and appearance. The *mystery formula* therefore alerts the reader or audience for a disclosure of fundamental importance in the following oracle.[204] The stage is set for a most powerful metaphor in our textual image:

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[201] D. E. Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1983) 250-52.

[202] R. H. Charles explains that the name Babylon is the mystical name for Rome. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John Revelation* vol. II (65); others understand it as possible allusion to the "great Mother Goddess" E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation, Vision of a Just World,* 96; or as reference to Rome, as the place, where all shameful and horrible things find home (Tacitus, *Ann.* XV.44) so e.g. R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1977) 310.

[203] J. Roloff e.g. concludes: "As clear as the vision is, the subsequent interpretation is, in contrast, as dark and puzzling" J. Roloff, *Revelation.* Trans. J. E. Alsup 234.

[204] For further references and extended literature on the *mystery formula* see D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* 252-45, 333, esp. 423-24.

> "And the woman whom you saw is the city, the great one, who holds royal dominion over the kings of the earth" (Rev 17:18).

While the entire oracle offers insights into the mystery, namely the powerful relations between the harlot, the beast and the kings, the climactic closure of the oracle reveals the identity of the woman as the city, the great one, Babylon. The concluding answer to the *mystery formula* is provided at the end. The revelation of the mystery is given as classic metaphor: the woman is the city. This metaphor evokes exciting appearances for our textual image.

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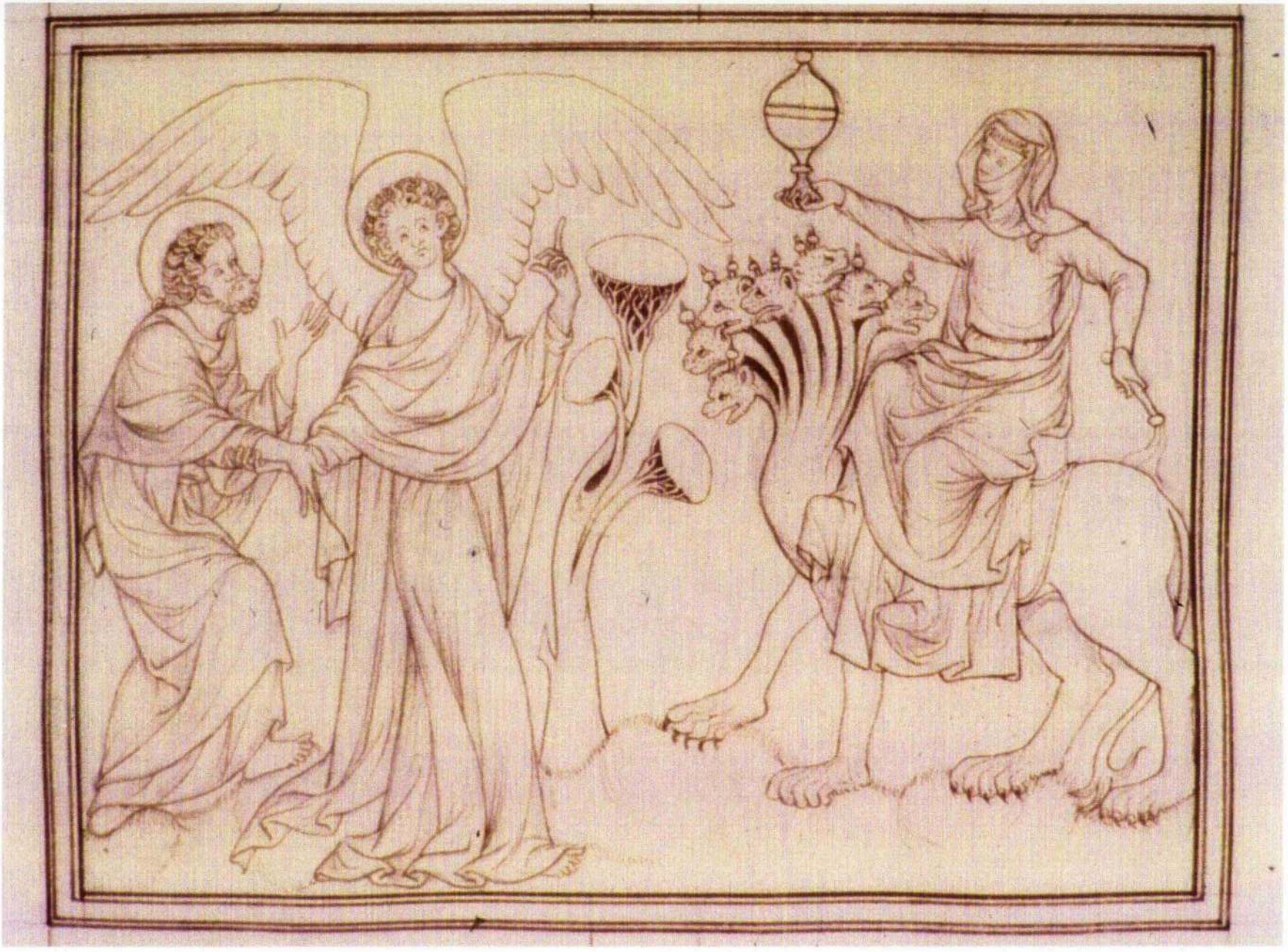
Apocalypse Douce, Ms 180 fol. 48r

The Harlot Riding the Beast



3.1.2. The Woman

> And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed round about with purple and scarlet, and gilt with gold, and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication.
>
> And on her forehead a name was written: A mystery; Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications, and the abominations of the earth. (Rev 17:3-5).[205]

The "mystery" of the great harlot has inspired many artists to interpret visually a remarkably eloquent image in the Apocalypse. The artist of the Douce Apocalypse [5] engraves the word "minist(eri)u(m)" the word mystery on the forehead of the harlot, marking her concealed identity.[206] The artist reclaims the text in the miniature, an unusual technique alerting the reader to the importance of the message inherent in the words.[207] The question looms, who is the woman, who appears beautifully sitting on a "scarlet coloured beast" with its seven heads and ten horns? Who is the woman, who self-confidently offers the golden cup "full of abomination and filthiness of her fornication" decisively in her hand? Who is the woman, who incites the beast with her whip? Who is the mysterious woman called "mother of the fornications, and the abominations of

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[205] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.

[206] [5] Bodleian Library, Oxford, *Apokalypse Ms. Douce 180.* folio 48r (p.71). (Library photo, with permission). Concerning the reading "minist(eri)u(m)" see P. Klein, *Apokalypse Ms. Douce 180* (Graz: Akademische Verlagsanstalt 1981) Commentary Volume 215.

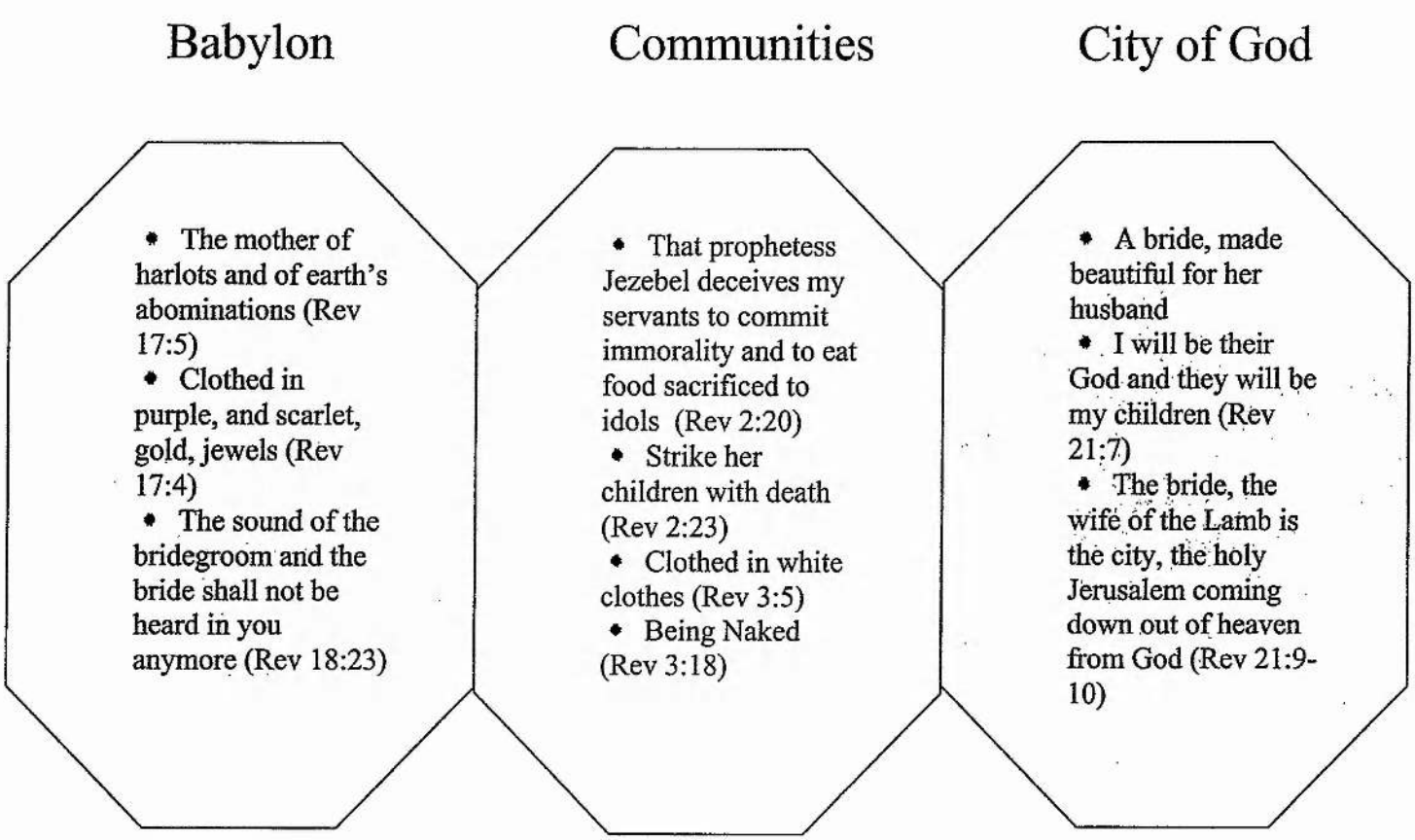
[207] For an extend discussion on the topic of verbal description and visualization see R. Muir Wright "Sound in pictured silence: The significance of writing in the Douce Apocalypse" 239-74.

the earth"? The angel, taking John's hand, shows the mystery of the woman, the woman who is the city Babylon. With John, the revelation is unveiled to all those who carry "a mind of wisdom" (Rev 17:9). They will be able to recognize her identity, which is the identity of the city Babylon.

Tradition

The metaphor of the city as woman will be our next focus for structural analysis on the level of the text and social-historical conceptualisation. The city as woman presents a most evocative part of our textual image, an image designed to incite the senses. The motif-network, which includes the bride, harlot, and the prophetess Jezebel and encompasses a whole range of various associative signifiers, traditionally linked with the image of the woman, consciously or unconsciously ensures emotional appeal. Topics like sexuality, marriage, bearing of children, and adornments, which are resonating throughout the metaphor, ensure vital affective responses to our text. At this point, we are merely concerned with the textual components providing the conditions for the efficacy of our image. Yet this analysis sets the stage for the following investigation into the effectiveness of imagery that incites imagination and evokes the response of reader/audience.

The Woman


Babylon
Communities
City of God
• The mother of harlots and of earth's abominations (Rev 17:5)
• Clothed in purple, and scarlet, gold, jewels (Rev 17:4)
• The sound of the bridegroom and the bride shall not be heard in you anymore (Rev 18:23)
• That prophetess Jezebel deceives my servants to commit immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols (Rev 2:20)
• Strike her children with death (Rev 2:23)
• Clothed in white clothes (Rev 3:5)
• Being Naked (Rev 3:18)
• A bride, made beautiful for her husband
• I will be their God and they will be my children (Rev 21:7)
• The bride, the wife of the Lamb is the city, the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:9-10)

The metaphor draws unique vitality from the fact that in the ancient world major cities were often venerated as divine wives of the patron god of the city.[208] Biblical texts indirectly offer a glimpse of a controversy arising from the worship of divine wives as city goddesses in the ancient Near East. For a monotheistic belief in the one and only God, this concept certainly provided a great challenge. Various biblical texts reflect the controversy over a common understanding among cultures in the ancient Near East,[209] mirroring attempts to reinterpret the tradition of personified capital cities married to a god, in a context of monotheistic belief. In biblical texts, the image of marriage often signifies Israel's covenant relationship with God while adultery pictures the violation and ultimate destruction of this relation (e.g. Deut 31:16). The vivid application of the personified city as woman becomes prominent in the prophetic biblical tradition.[210] Instead of a benevolent goddess, protecting the city, she appears as mortal woman, as harlot, who violates her exclusive marriage obligation to her husband/God. Frequently, the metaphor is extended into a narrative, which explicates significant aspects of the initial figure of speech. Ezek 16:1:1-43 is an eloquent example of a narrative metaphor, in which Jerusalem is personified as woman.[211]

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[208] While there is strong evidence for the vitality of the concept of the city as divine woman, its origin cannot be reconstructed any more with certainty. Julie Galambush concludes: "it was evidently a given in the West Semitic cultures of the ancient Near East that major cities were considered the female, divine consorts of the male gods whose temples they contained." (22) *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel. The City as Yahweh's Wife* (SBLDS; Atlanta: Scholars 1992).

[209] Ibid. 20-23, regarding the concept of the city as woman in the ancient Near East including extended bibliographical references.

[210] Ibid. 27-59.

[211] Ibid. esp.61-156, for an analysis of the city as Yahweh' wife in the book of Ezekiel

The metaphor can also carry economic overtones, and is used to graphically condemn and malign foreign cities. God's chosen people are placed in contrast to foreign cities characterized as personified women. In this context, various negative associations with womanhood are exploited to signify failure and vices of cities that are not part of the covenant community. A prominent example is Tyre portrayed as harlot who "prostitutes herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth" (Isa 23:17), a city, famous for its economic power. In the context of the metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse, allusions to prophetic texts (Ezek 26-28, Isa 23) evoke the vivid memory of the cause and destruction of Tyre as reality of Babylon and critique against economic exploitation. [212]

Another striking connotation of the metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse appears in the context of the Greco-Roman worship of the goddess Roma. A foreign power, the city of Rome visualized as goddess, becomes a suggestive reference for the harlot Babylon. Many of the major cities in Asia Minor, among them Pergamum, Ephesus and Sardis, had temples honouring the goddess Roma, who was worshipped as "personification (and deification) of a collective, the Roman state."[213] Altars, ritualised reverence, priests, and sacrificial games in veneration of the goddess symbolized the deification of a worldly state, Rome, promoting visible confirmation of Babylon's corrupting idolatrous religion. Among members of the seven communities in Asia Minor,

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[212] Concerning the author's economic critique in the Apocalypse see: R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* 338-78. Bauckham focuses on the likely original historical context in which deliberate echoes of the Old Testament portrayals of Babylon and Tyre refer to the city Rome.

[213] R. Mellor, *) (∃ 5: 0 + The Worship of the Goddess Roma in the Greek World.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1975) 23.

the city Rome must have evoked the image of a superior power, which culturally and economically dominated the Mediterranean world. This claim is particularly evident in the worship of Roma, who carries strong religious overtones. Rome's veneration as goddess thus serves as effective connotation of the female goddess, the city Babylon, an image likely to excite an ancient reader/audience to appropriate text to life experience. The city provides the material, charged with the potential explosiveness of words that can rage into war.

Among apocalyptic texts, *4 Ezra* provides a paradigm, which utilizes the literary image of a woman transformed into the city Zion, while in the story of *Joseph and Aseneth* the female character Aseneth is given a new identity as "city of refuge." Transcendent reality signified through transformation as in the metaphor of a female figure as city provides a characteristic mark for the apocalyptic genre.[214] In such a context, the metaphor of the woman as city certainly draws on a long and variable tradition. The significant function of the metaphor, as Esler points out in his analysis of *4 Ezra*, must be sought in the dynamic of the image to initiate a shift from cognitive to visionary level.[215]

Personalization of Community

A notable effect of the metaphor of the city as woman is the personalization of an abstract image, the city community. The metaphorical play disturbs contentment with the untainted rationalization of conceptual ideas of

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[214] E. McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities. Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*.

[215] Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* esp. 118-19.

community, stirring the senses with an exciting image, the woman. As metaphor, city community comes alive, receives a human body, identity, and human face. The concept of community is successfully removed from its theoretical framework into the context of human life experience itself. The stage is prepared for empathy and appropriation of the metaphor to tradition, life experience and future possibility.

For the reader/audience familiar with biblical tradition, the metaphor sharpens conscious awareness for the relation between God and the members of the community, drawing an evocative analogy to human experience. The relation between the woman/city and God becomes an eloquent reminiscence of the covenant community. Mutual dependency and responsibility of the community members are possibilities rooted in the community's relation with God. The metaphor of marriage or failure of marriage thus suggests the possibility of community life as relation with the covenant partner. Gordon Freeman explicates this personalized dimension of the image of marriage, an essential dimension of the biblical covenant as concept for the city:

> The mutual covenant was emphasized by the prophets and later the rabbis. In brief, it assumes that the existence of the governor has no meaning without the existence of the governed. Mutual interdependency and responsibility are characteristic of this type of covenant....The transcendent authority cannot abstract itself from the community or the individual. Unless the relationship is intimate and personal it will not impinge on the life of the covenant partner. Implicit in this relationship is the need for trust based on the knowledge and expectation of each covenant partner. [216]

[216] G. M. Freeman, *The Heavenly Kingdom: Aspects of Political Thought in the Talmud and Midrash* (Lanham/London: The Jerusalem Center for Public

In addition to prophetic and rabbinical texts, the metaphor of the city employs the tradition of the marriage as metaphor for the covenant, providing an evocative image, in which the covenant between God and the people suggests the possibility of mutual relationship in a Christian context. In the Apocalypse, the marriage contract as reference for the covenant between God and his people provides the metaphor for the relation between God and the Lamb and community.[217] While this metaphor provides the dimension of "personal, intimate" relation based on trust, we should also keep in mind how different the concept of marriage in antiquity was in comparison to modern Western societies. Marriage generally was an arrangement that significantly enhanced the survival and support of the extended family sharing the same economic and social ties as well as religious traditions. This extended family is also intrinsically linked and formally connected to the remoter kin.[218] The image of marriage thus offers an excellent reference for the greater community while the

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affairs/Center for Jewish Community Studies; University Press of America 1986) 3.

[217] Gordon Freeman contrasts two types of covenant relationship:

> The mutual covenant was emphasized by the prophets and later the rabbis...The metaphor of the mutual covenant is marriage. Each partner is answerable to the other. The relationship is a dynamic one. The gracious covenant was emphasized by Christianity. Here, transcendent authority tends to be parental, beneficently imposing its will on the passive child.

The textual image of the city in the Apocalypse with its eloquent metaphor of the woman as city does not conform to this categorization at all. In the metaphor, mutual relation is used as image for a dynamic community structure in a Christian context.

[218] For anthropological models concerning kinship and marriage in the biblical context, see B. Malina, *The New Testament World* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox 1993) 117-47.

marriage obligation pictures a relation, in which God provides existence for the community. The choice of community members to fulfil or reject the covenant/marriage obligation thus plays an essential role in the formation and existence of the community/city. In this context, the metaphor of the woman provides a stimulus to imagine an extended range of evocative perspectives on community originating from the link between the individual woman, and the community of people, and God. In other words, the range of various related signifiers connoting female characteristics provides an all-important source for the recognition of personal identity as an essential part of city/community, and humanity in relation to God. Of course, the text can only provide the material, the brushstrokes and colours. To see personal identity in the context of social community, to envision community as heavenly city is essentially an act of imaginative reader/audience response, which will be the explicit subject in following chapters.[219]

Visualized Identity

In the book of Revelation, the harlot Babylon is the most colourful female character. The visual image of the harlot provides vivacious perspectives on failed community life. Whatever is said about the harlot, becomes another perspective on the metaphor of the city Babylon. Her beautiful appearance, her dominion over the kings (Rev 17:18) and power of seduction over the nations, kings and merchants on earth (Rev 18:3) are part of possibilities of community.

[219] Regarding the correlation between personal and social identity see: M. Warnock, *Imagination and Time* 109-26.

Her actions, described as the most horrible deeds committed by human beings, her drunkenness "with the blood of the holy people and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (Rev 17:6) acquire substance among human beings who violate God's covenant. Dennis McCarthy in a survey of data from the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world maintains that the concept of blood in many cultures has been symbolic of certain powers. It notably signifies the powers of war, destruction, and death, and thus crosses the lines of different concepts of sacrifice. In the Hebrew tradition, blood belongs to the divine sphere, is life given by God (Lev 17:11). In that sense, the harlot's drunkenness suggests the violent act of taking away life given by God.[220] Blood takes on a significant role as metaphor for death and respectively life in the textual image of the city. Babylon's acts of injustice, remembered in God's judgment (Rev 18:5), her passionate immoral longing that has deceived the kings, merchants and the nations on earth to participate in her deeds, are violations of the relation between God and the people. As the one whose "sins have piled up to heaven" (Rev 18:5), "the mother of earth's abominations" (Rev 17:5), she characterizes the people who are at the brink of their own destruction, without hope for revival. The imminent self-destructiveness of the community could not be pictured more vividly than in the image of Babylon as woman sitting on the beast, the brute animal from the abyss, which in the Apocalypse looms as evil power.

Babylon's actions provide a highly dramatic spectacle, for which history has not failed to prove its potential emotionally to arouse its readers/audience to

[220] D. J. McCarthy "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice" *JBL* 88 (1969): 166-76.

fervent response. The foundation is set in the text on which any historical community builds her demons, whether it is Babylon, Rome, or Wall Street in New York. Yet again we are leaving the formal reading far behind in favour of imaginative appropriation! For the moment, we will have to stay more closely in the boundaries of our text analysis.

Mysterious Woman

The problem is that the spectacle is not always realized in its vanity. The Apocalypse warns of a dangerous mysterious woman, who is the city. Her power rests in her ability to deceive the inhabitants of the world, who wonder with great admiration. Her followers are not aware of the destructive forces looming in the relation between the woman and the beast. In the same way as the beautiful woman in the miniature from the Douce Apocalypse riding on the beast does not cause fear for the observer [5], the real identity of the woman and the beast seems to be obscured.

> The beast that you saw, was, yet is not, but is about to ascend from the abyss and it departs into utter destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names are not written into the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder with great admiration seeing the beast, for it was, yet is not, but it will be present. (Rev 17:8)

Disguised is the identity of the woman, Babylon. Guidance is necessary to unveil the mystery of the woman who emerges as a beautiful, powerful queen. It is on the level of metaphorical composition that her dual identities become transparent. The metaphor reveals Babylon the queen, as bloodthirsty, filthy

harlot riding on the forces of evil. As shocking composition, the metaphor awakens to reality, sharpens the awareness for Babylon's cruel face, hidden behind an appearance of beauty, power and glamour. A community appears that walks towards destruction. Metaphorical composition exposes the dual identities of the city Babylon.

Clothing

In contrast to the elaborately marked appearance of the harlot, often visualized as dangerous, deceitful woman, the bride seems to be just the silhouette of a profile, scarcely characterized. Yet there are a variety of textual elements that indirectly complement the characteristics and identity of the bride. Throughout history, clothing has always been a signature for personality worn as visible expression. As the harlot is presenting her royal claim wearing scarlet and purple fine linen (Rev 18:16), the bride has prepared herself clothed in fine linen. In our metaphor, clothing makes the identity of the two women visually apparent, which is also the identity of the two cities. In the Apocalypse, clothing with a range of associative signifiers serves as physical data for identity of the bride and the harlot, the city-communities of Babylon and the New Jerusalem. The symbol of white clothing (cf. nakedness) thus presents an interesting motif-network, which figuratively marks the relation between the bride and the followers of the Lamb. The promise that the few names in Sardis "who have not soiled their garments...will walk with me in white, since they are worthy" (Rev 3:4 see 16:5) resonates in the description of the bride "clothed with fine linen shining and pure" (Rev 19:8). The symbolism of the fine linen, which usually is of white or almost white colour, is explained as "the righteous deeds of the

saints" (Rev 19:8 see also Rev 2:17). The image of white clothing, as symbol for righteousness and purity, relates the ones who have proven to be worthy in the seven communities with the bride, the city of God.[221] Purity characterized through the white garments is further explicated in Rev 7:14: "they have washed their long garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" relating their purity to the Lamb's sacrifice.

The characteristic of the people clothed in white garments is contrasted with the ones who pride themselves because they are rich and not in need of anything (Rev 3:17), the ones who are advised to realize their nakedness: "Namely you say: I am wealthy and I have become rich and I have no need of anything - yet you do not know that you are the miserable one, pitiable and poor and blind and naked." (Rev 3:17). The community in Laodicea is counselled to buy white garments to clothe themselves (Rev 3:18). Nakedness in this context is used as symbol for "spiritual poverty" of members of a community who in admiration for themselves and their own wealth have lost the perspective to see (Rev 3:18). They are in need of discipline and guidance (Rev 3:19) and eye salve (Rev 3:18). On the contrary, the community in Smyrna is praised for her complete destitution that is the life of a beggar, which is called her "spiritual wealth" (Rev 2:9). Smyrna's distress will finally earn its members the crown of life (Rev 2:10). The image of the wealth of Laodicea directly corresponds with the rich appearance of the harlot, the city, the great one, who is "clothed in purple, and scarlet, and covered with gold, and jewellery, and priceless stone"

[221] The colour white generally was considered to be sacred and pleasing to the gods among the ancients. For references in Greco-Roman literature see D. E. Aune "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John" 12.

while she is "holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her immorality" (Rev 17:4). The image of clothing thus carries significant connotations referring to the economic and social dimension of community life, which greatly influences whether community is defined by mutual responsibility or defined by pride, self-reliance and exploitation.

Sexuality

Nakedness also carries another connotation as euphemism for sexuality in relation to the harlot's immoralities (Rev 18:3 cf. Gen 2:25). The frequent biblical use of sexual immorality denoting infidelity to God (e.g. Ezek 16:36-8) carries severe charges for the accusation of fornication and sexual immorality. In a biblical context, in which these images are frequently employed as references for the broken relation between God and human beings, the metaphor of the women as city denotes a possible option, the ultimate denial of the city of God. Nakedness used as reference for the broken relation between human beings and God (Rev 17:16) thus pictures possibilities of utmost consequence, the possibility of Nothingness for human beings. Depending on the kind of clothing human beings choose, they either become part of the city Babylon or the city of God. As part of Babylon, their nakedness will be like the harlot's nakedness, whose nakedness marks her ruin and terrible destruction (Rev 17:16).

Associative signifiers relating the image of clothing/nakedness thus include a web of references illustrating important aspects of the identities of the bride and the harlot. These references find their analogy in characteristics of the members of the communities. As part of the metaphorical network of the city, clothing becomes a symbol for the quality of relation between human beings and

God. The image of clothing indirectly points to actions of individual members concerning community, thus implicating possible options for community life.

Bareness and New Life

The woman Jezebel in the community of Thyatira also carries exemplary characteristics for the metaphor of the city. She is portrayed as a prophetess who seduces the servants of God and the Lamb (Rev 2:20) with her teachings. Her accusations include immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols, charges that link her practices with the charges against the harlot Babylon (e.g. Rev 18:3). The woman Jezebel in the community of Thyatira plays an analogous deceitful role as the harlot who makes the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her immoralities (Rev 17:2). The metaphorical "brushstrokes" characterizing the woman thus include the individual personal perspective (Jezebel) as well as the greater community of the city (Babylon/the heavenly Jerusalem). The representative deeds of a symbolic individual in the community (Jezebel) are thus another aspect of Babylon's deeds. For a woman in antiquity, the judgment given to Jezebel is most severe, marking the gravity of her violations against the Son of God who judges her: denied for Jezebel is the life of her descendants. Jezebel will lose her children (Rev 2:23). In analogy to Jezebel's fate, the harlotry of the woman Babylon also does not bear any fruit. It ultimately brings about the destruction of the community/city, death.

Quite differently, appears the vision of the New Jerusalem. A most honourable status of a woman, the status as bride, is used as metaphor for the marriage between the bride and the Lamb. In contrast to the barren harlot, the

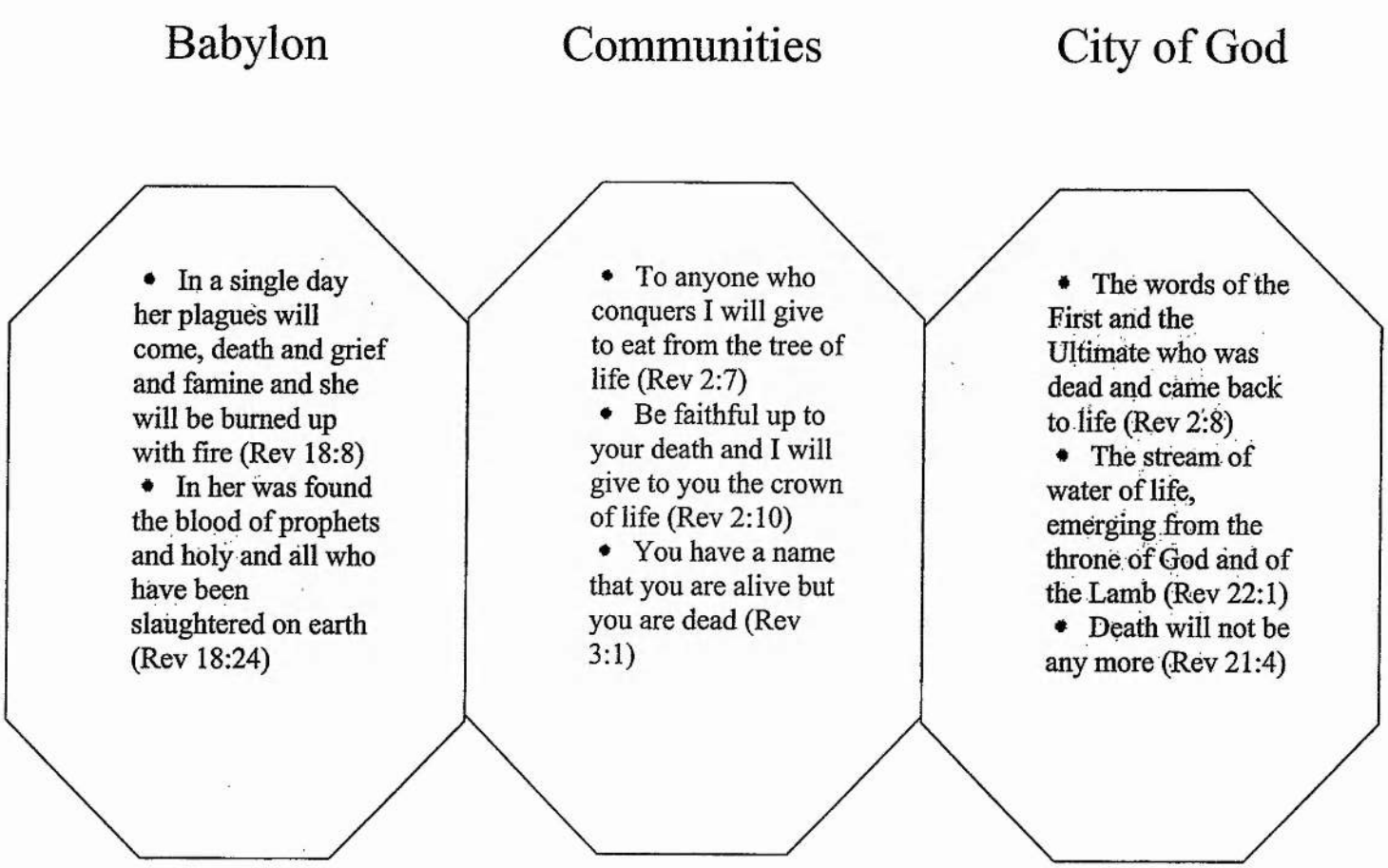
image of the bride implies the hope for new life, children, and descendants. In context of the city it carries the hope for a new beginning, a creation of the new lively community/city. As the denial of life to the harlot connotes the destruction of community, so does the possibility of descendants in the image of marriage bear the possibility for new life in the community. The tree, the water, the book of life (e.g. Rev 21: 27-22:2), motifs that characterize the vital force emerging from the relationship of marriage, picture new life, the potential of a new community.

In our composition of the narrative metaphor of the city, the sensual image of the woman plays a most important role, giving flesh and blood to an abstract image, the city/community. Moreover, the human face and body strikes life experience in a most intimate manner, in which marriage, adornments, descendants, and sexuality tell possible stories of community life. Left far behind is the realm of theoretical argumentation, while the foundation is prepared for reader/audience response to the text, a response that is significantly stimulated by one of the most arousing images possible, the human body.

3.1.3 Death and Life

The antithesis between death and life is central to our metaphorical composition. As communities of human beings, the cities, Babylon and the New Jerusalem, encompass life and death as physical reality. In the metaphor, however, the appearance of the physical reality also becomes a reference for spiritual dimensions. In our textual image of the city, the unexpected metaphorical composition sharpens awareness for life and death signifying the identity of two antithetical communities, Babylon and the city of God. Death and life will be our third motif-network for analysis on the textual level.

Death and Life



Mere appearance can be a deceitful guide for any judgment over the character of the community. The motif-elements referring to life and death incorporate a variety of associations and interrelated and contrasting images that appear in our metaphorical composition. The reality of life and death becomes a play on words that directs attention towards possible different dimensions of community, its liveliness or deadly quality. While the prospect for the most magnificent city Babylon is death, grief, famine, consummation by fire (Rev 18:8), the city of God is depicted with images that are characteristics of the garden Eden (Gen 2:8-17), a new creation. The possibility of the new city emerges from the ruins of Babylon. In the words of the Apocalypse, Babylon, and with her all the evil spirits of the world have to go down before the new community can arise as city of God (Rev 18:2).

[6]

Apocalypse Ms. Douce 180, fol. 50r

The Lament of the Merchants and Kings

Hope and Despair

In our textual image, the question of humanity existing at the brink of life and death is evoked for the reader in the antithesis of the two cities. Community life on earth is embedded in the tension between hope for life and despair over the always-imminent loss of life, between the possibility of Babylon and the city of God. The artist of the Douce Apocalypse skilfully visualizes this tension between hope and despair at the verge of ultimate destruction in "The Lament of the Merchants and Kings" [6].[222] In the miniature, the harlot appears enthroned as queen, holding the golden royal sceptre amidst the city walls proclaiming: "Sui reine et sine sui pas vedue et sine verrai pas weimentement." "I sit a queen, and am no widow; sorrow I shall not see" (Rev 18:7). Text again speaks in the image, underscoring the queen's self-confident expectation in the native Anglo-Norman tongue of the original audience/readers of the medieval manuscript. The queen's claim appears in utter contrast to two speech scrolls carried by the merchants and kings: "Allas, Allas, i cele grant cyte ke fu environe de bise pourpre et de escarlete, et de or de pere preciuses et de margeries, kar un hure sunt" " Alas! alas! that great city, which was clothed with fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and was gilt with gold, and precious stones, and pearls." (Rev 18:16). "Allas, Allas, i cele grant cyte babiloine i cele forte cyte. Car a un houre vient ta iuyse."[223] Alas! Alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city: for in one hour is thy judgment come" (Rev

[222] [6] Bodleian Library, Oxford, *Apokalypse Ms. Douce 180* Fol. 50r. (p.75). (Library photo, with permission).
[223] P. Klein, *Apokalypse Ms. Douce 180* (Graz: Akademische Verlagsanstalt 1981) Commentary Volume 217.

18:10).[224] The merchants watching in despair and the kings mourning fearfully lament the looming destruction of the city Babylon. The tension between the harlot's self-assured desire and the desperation of her most precious allies pictures the reality of death clothed in lively appearance, which marks Babylon's identity as community. Even if the audience/readers are not able to read or understand the Latin text, the language of the speech scrolls assures that the audience/reader does not fail to recognize this important revelation!

The lament of the merchants and seafarers certainly is a scenario that calls for imaginative visualization. How could the moment of Babylon's destruction be communicated more emphatically? Imminent death can be sensed in the tears, the sorrows, cries of the bystanders and they are not the only ones. The graphic detail almost certainly engages the readers/audience to imagine the spectacle to engage emphatically in the text. Yet the question is will the reader/audience participate in the sorrow or the happiness over the destruction of the great city?

Pride

In the biblical context of the covenant, pride has traditionally been a major violation of the mutual relationship between God and the people and the people among each other (e.g. Ezek 16:49, 16:56). Pride blocks the conscious awareness of the other one and destroys the ability to recognize those who are in need, those who are poor. Mutual relation is impossible if pride reigns in the community/city. In the Apocalypse, Babylon's inhabitants who are not aware of

[224] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.

the other, the beggar, and the ones in need are pictured dramatically in Babylon's appearance as woman. Babylon, acclaimed the great, in her beautiful appearance, as woman adorned with gold, pearls and priceless stones, causes the powerful to fall in love with her. Even John, the prophet of God's message, wonders with great admiration about the woman (Rev 17:6) who exercises power over the kings of the earth (Rev 17:18) and rides the beast (Rev 17:3). As the queen, the powerful on earth are concerned with their own wealth and riches. The woman and with her the community members cannot see that there is no marriage celebration (Rev 18:22-3), no future waiting but destruction if community is not rooted in mutual relation, in God's covenant. Babylon's unfounded confidence is proclaimed at a moment of her imminent destruction: "In a single day her plagues will come, death and grief and famine and she will be burned up with fire" (Rev 18:8). The scene captures the pride characteristic for the city that does not realize imminent sorrow, destruction, and death. Self-confidence blinds her eyes to see what is obvious; death is the reality of the community Babylon, Babylon, that "will never be found anymore" (Rev 18:21).

Wealth and Power

Important for Babylon's ultimate destruction is the way the inhabitants abuse wealth and power. The precious stones, the royal garments and pearls and gold evoke the memory of one of the most splendid cities in the ancient world, Babylon. The role beauty and wealth of the city play in regard to the community of human beings becomes a significant topic in the textual image of the city. It reflects on the character of the community members. The lament of those "who

committed immorality and lived deliciously with her" [the woman, Babylon] (Rev 18:9), vividly dramatized by the artist of the Douce Apocalypse [6], visualizes the moment awaiting the imminent destruction of the community Babylon. This moment is brought about by the power and wealth accumulated in the hands of Babylon's people!

The reader/audience is invited to observe the moment of Babylon's ultimate destruction. The text evokes the imaginative scene of the burning city, which is the eradication of everything Babylon splendidly represented. In the distance stand the kings of the earth watching " in fear of her torment," crying "Alas! Alas! The city, the great one, Babylon, the city, the mighty one, in one hour has your judgment come!" (Rev 18:10). And the merchants "weep and grieve over her, since no one buys their cargo anymore." (Rev 18:11) The merchants lament the loss of their wealth (Rev 18:9-24), wealth that must have been extraordinary according to the list of cargoes in the text.[225] It is obvious that the wealth which is lost, has served some citizens, especially seafarers, merchants and kings, not all citizens are included to share it: human beings, slaves, are among the wares, to be sold for profit (Rev 18:13)! They are not considered to be a vital part of the city/community. They are merchandise! Mourned by the kings, seafarers and merchants "who have grown rich by the wealth of her [Babylon's] delicacy" (Rev 18:3), is the destruction of their valuable cargo, which no one will be able to buy anymore (Rev 18:11)! Profit

[225] Bauckham gives a detailed analysis of the wealth and extravagance of the merchandise listed in the text in a historical context concluding:

> most of the items were among the most expensive of Rome's imports....prime examples of luxury and extravagance by Roman writers critical of the decadence, as they saw it, of the wealthy families of Rome in the early imperial period.

not mutual relation and support is the primary concern among Babylon's inhabitants. The abundant wealth of the city Babylon and the hunger for more has blocked the vision for the possibility of a human city, and the vision for a community that is the home of God among human beings, a city whose wealth are her inhabitants. For the reader today, the merchants and seafarers as model characters representing Babylon's fraud, profit and gain might come as surprise since these groups certainly are not considered dishonourably rich in a society. Yet in the ancient Mediterranean society with limited goods and wealth, their profit making as traders often at monopoly prices was perceived as usury and violation of the limited wealth of the society.[226]

Unexpectedly among these mourners, who throw dust on their heads, cry and weep, a joyful cry can be heard from the holy ones, apostles and prophets: "Rejoice over her! O heaven, you holy ones and apostles and prophets, for God has administered judgment for you against her!" (Rev 18:20). The artful play on the visualized funeral combined with the joyful cry creates a paradox scenario. The stage is set for empathetic participation in the scene either mourning seemingly great wealth and power of the city or joyfully celebrating her judgment and ultimate destruction. In a sense, the lament of the powerful people on earth over Babylon appears highly ironic since the audience or reader knows that her fate is the just judgment for exactly what her mourners lament: the loss of Babylon's greatness, power and wealth.[227] Pride, power, and wealth are

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The Climax of Prophecy 366 and 67.

[226] B. Malina, *The New Testament World* 103-7.

[227] Adela Yarbro Collins elaborates on the ironic character of the dirge in chapter 18:

> The dirge is a prominent form in the chapter, and the relation between its form and function is complex and ambiguous. The dirges of the unspecified speaker (v.14), the

questioned regarding their function in community. A perplexing funeral opens the possibility of envisioning a completely different community, the community of God beyond the ruins of Babylon. Unexpected joyfulness over the destruction of Babylon opens new perspectives on life!

Death and Community

Babylon is not an abstract name of a city. Babylon is any community that allows the never satisfied hunger for power, wealth, and pride to replace the rule of God and the Lamb. Babylon's death is therefore the death of the people. This is why the community in Sardis is warned to become "alive and strengthen the remaining that is ready to die" (Rev 3:2). Accordingly, Laodicea, a community of wealth, riches, a community that does not lack anything, is in need of eye salve to smear on the eyes (Rev 3:18) to enable her members to envision what community might be a city of God and the Lamb. To see, to envision reality beyond the magnificent city, beyond the power of the kings or beauty of the harlot, requires the ability to see the ruins, which are the real Babylon. To be able to see poverty and distress of the community in Smyrna, will ultimately win the crown of life (Rev 2:8, 10). This is the revelation of a city built on the ruins of pride and self-glorification, a community in which wealth and power are not

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merchants (vv. 16-17a), and the mariners (vv. 18b.19) do not contain any obvious condemnations. When read in isolation, the traditional function of mourning is prominent. Such a reading could evoke sympathetic awe. The context shows, however, that if such pathos was intended by the author, it was primarily for dramatic effect. The parallelism among the kings, the merchants and the mariners implies that *all* the misfortunes described are richly deserved punishments, not just those of the kings.

"Revelation 18: Taunt-Song or Dirge?" in J. Lambrecht ed. *L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament* (Leuven: University Press 1980) 185-204 esp. 203.

exploited to serve the mighty.

The destruction of Babylon is her judgment as well as the judgment of her people (Rev 18:10). Babylon's pride, her hunger for power and wealth, characterize her as city of death not life and destroy her people. Her ultimate destruction, her judgment is thus judgment over all those who create Babylon as citizens. In this context, the prophetess Jezebel, within the community of Thyatira (Rev 2:20b-23b) again serves as exemplary community member. The associative textual play on the "woman," which includes the individual personal perspective (Jezebel) but also the city community (the woman Babylon), is reflected in the characteristics portraying the woman Jezebel (Rev 2:20b-23b) in Thyatira, and the harlot, Babylon (Rev 18:11-24). The judgment over Babylon features very similar charges as the accusations against Jezebel. They include deceit (Rev 2:20) ref. the "name, a mystery: 'Babylon, the great...'" (Rev 17:5); "immorality" (Rev 2:20-21) ref. (Rev 17:2, 4; 18:3, 9); and eating sacrificial food (Rev 2:20) ref. "the wine of her immoral passionate longing" (Rev 18:3), "holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her immorality" (Rev 17:4). While Babylon's indictments finally conclude in the pronouncements of the angel, that the possibility of the future, envisioned as the marriage between bridegroom and bride, is forever gone (Rev 18:21-24), Jezebel's offspring is stricken by death. For both women the future is denied. The accusation against a symbolic individual in the community, Jezebel, is thus encompassed in Babylon's judgment, the cosmological view of pronouncement of ultimate judgment of the great city (Rev 18:4-8). In other words, Babylon and Jezebel represent possibilities in community including the possibility of ultimate failure, death (Babylon), to be no more, Nothingness.

Yet the woman as city Babylon can be found anywhere. It can be Laodicea, Thyatira, Pergamon, any city. In the words of the Apocalypse:

> all the nations have drunk of the wine of her passionate immoral longing, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants have grown rich with the wealth of her delicacy (Rev 18:3).

The failure of Babylon as community is the failure of humanity to create a life-enriching city. The sequence of judgment therefore forms an artfully constructed part of our textual image, in which the judgement of the individual members of the communities is correlated with the climactic greater cosmological context of Babylon's indictments. The context embraces the possibility of final judgment, final destruction, Nothingness for inhabitants of the city.

New Life

How differently visualized is the possibility of the New Jerusalem. The visions are metaphorical images for the new city. They include the city as woman, the bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:1-2); the city as "human geography" (Rev 21:9-27); and the city as vision of God and the Lamb among his servants (Rev 22:1-5). With the heavenly Jerusalem, metaphorical language enters a topic that as reference to a new city is meant to open a new horizon of meaning, antithetical to the reality of the city Babylon. Images like the bride (Rev 21:2), the water of life (Rev 21:6; 22:1) and "the tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, surely producing fruit for each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:2) certainly convey the idea of a new Eden, a

new creation. The images evoke the beginning, Bloch's "pre-appearance," which needs to become the All, the city, where "death will not be any more, moreover nor grief, nor crying nor pain will be there anymore" (Rev 21:4). They bring about the memory of God's promise in the beginning, in which water grants life providing the foundation for a new vision, the stream of water of life emerging from the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev 22:1). The city of God thus marks a new beginning, a new creation, a new life as already anticipated in the promises to the seven communities: "To anyone who conquers I will give to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God" (Rev 2:7). Those who conquer will not suffer the second death (Rev 2:11), nor will their name be erased from the book of life (Rev 3:5) instead they will gain the crown of life (Rev 2:10). Faithfulness of the followers of the Lamb therefore characterizes the ones who conquer. They are promised and given citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem. The promises include: food from the tree of life (Rev 2:7 ref. 22:2), deliverance from the second death (Rev 2:11 ref. 21:4), the gift of the hidden manna and the new name (Rev 2:17 ref. 21:12-14, 22:2) and royal power (Rev 2:26-28 ref. 22:5). Other gifts encompass the writing of the name in the book of life (Rev 3:5 ref. 21:27), becoming a pillar in the temple of God (Rev 3:12 ref. 21:16-17) and sitting on the throne (Rev 3:21 ref. 22:3). Some of the promises are almost exactly reinstated in the vision of the city of God (e.g. the tree of life). Others are associated through indirect references: e.g. "Anyone who conquers, I will make this one to be a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev 3:12) as an association to the description of the measurements of the city. The measurements give the city the form of a perfect cube, the symbol of the Holy of Holies (Rev 21:16-17). However, this strange world points towards a dimension

in life that cannot be pictured adequately. The encounter with the text thus possibly "makes us aware in the process that it points beyond itself to something which is, strictly speaking, unimaginable."[228] Appearance in the metaphor provides the material, the incentive to envision what cannot be experienced yet.

Death is not eliminated, the world is still waiting. The Not-Yet is vividly pictured in the text, most genuinely in the antithesis of death and life in Christ's title: "the First and the Ultimate, who was dead and came back to life" (Rev 2:8). The metaphor brings about the paradox of Christian belief, that the promise of life in the heavenly city includes absolute darkness, includes death. Rev 2:10 advises the members of the community in Smyrna who are tested, distressed, and going to suffer to " be faithful up to your death." Like Christ himself (Rev 3:14), they are witnesses, μάρτυρες (Rev 2:13, 11:3), therefore, proclaiming God's kingdom even in the face of death. Like the Lamb, they have been "killed" on earth (Rev 18:24). The recurring images of the witness and the ones who "conquer" connote the Christian paradox that the ones who will suffer in the name of the Lamb are promised the crown of life and will be granted to "eat from the tree of life" (Rev 2:7). Thus, the structural antithesis between death and life, which cannot be resolved through conventional logic, leads the reader/audience into the mystery of the one "who was dead and came back to life" (Rev 2:8). Life in the city of God enters a new dimension. It has its origin and roots in the worldly city. Yet it is envisioned as life that is not threatened by

[228] R. Bauckham and T. Hart, *Hope against Hope* 100.

the second death, ultimate destruction (Rev 21:8). It means finding life in community, God among human beings (Rev 21:3).

The word plays on the images of death and life in the text paradoxically burst boundaries of language. The followers of the Lamb, who are losing their life faithfully, will earn life in the city of God. The ones who have the name that they are alive but are dead (Rev 3:1) are called "to become alive and strengthen the rest that is ready to die" (Rev 3:2). The arrogant self-assertiveness of those who believe they are alive is pictured most vividly in the city Babylon's hubris right before her own destruction: "I am no widow, sorrow I will never see" (Rev 18:7). Yet Babylon is the city of death, where the "blood of prophets and holy and all who have been killed on earth" (Rev 18:24), the blood of those who will ultimately find life in the city of God! Illogical logic in the metaphor becomes reference to a mystery: life that grows from the power of darkness!

The metaphorical composition painted with the motif-elements life and death juxtaposes the two realities in surprising manner, offering the stimulus to explore the significance in shared life experience, to realize reality of present experiences and envision what is not yet apparent. The text provides the material, which, as metaphorical composition is a provocation to leave literalness behind, and imaginatively appropriate appearance as well as pre-appearance to life experience. This essential act of imaginative reader/audience response will be the topic for our following chapter.

4. Referential Dimensions of the Metaphorical Network

Our goal in the previous chapter was to give an initial perception of the logic, the web of interrelated motifs and associative references, which are essential parts of the composition of our textual image. While this predominantly formal reading with its focus on the comprehensive, at times perplexing compositional characteristics of the text, provides a preliminary stage or basis for visualization of the textual material, mental visualization and visual appropriation as important step for understanding need to be the focus in the following chapters. In other words, significant aspects in a text or image cannot simply be grasped in letters, words and brushstrokes. Needed is the shared creativity of imagination in which the original vision becomes a vision of the readers/audience.[229] Through conscious visualization, the textual material is brought into the context of values and ideas of the reader/audience, mediated on the level of dramatic narrative structure as myth.

Fundamental Dimension

In our structural composition, we so far have focused on points of intersection between several semantic fields and the descriptive function of language. The emphasis here now will be on what Ricoeur calls the "mythical

[229] M. Warnock, *Time and Imagination* 44.

level."[230] As the French thinker Claude Lévi-Strauss proposes, structural analysis is not confined to the level of semantic analysis, but can serve as valuable methodology for what he calls "bundles of relations."[231] In his analysis of myth, he suggests that any element in a myth becomes meaningful through the relationship with other elements. As in language generally, meaning arises from structural relationships between parts of the myth, yet "language in myth exhibits specific properties. Those properties are only to be found *above* the ordinary linguistic level, that is, they exhibit more complex features than those which are to be found in any other kind of linguistic expression."[232] In that sense, an interaction of various bundles of relations are part of the mythical structure or mythical logic of the text in which intra and extra-textual elements correlate and may be studied as structural contrasts that correspond to fundamental oppositions experienced in reality.[233]

The textual image of the city in the Apocalypse is as well composed of relationships or bundles of relations, which we have called motif-elements. We followed some of these relations in a paradigmatic reading of the motif-networks of *kingdom, woman* and *life and death*. As associative webs, following units characterized by their organization, these compositional structures provide insight into values, beliefs and ideas referred to in the metaphor. An analysis of these aspects will be the focus in an investigation of the referential dimension of

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[230] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello 247.
[231] C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* vol. I Trans. C. Jacobson, B. Grundfest Schoepf (New York, London: Basic Books c.1963) 210. See esp. 206-231.
[232] Ibid. 210.
[233] D. Patte, *What is Structural Exegesis?* esp. 53-57.

the metaphor. A paradigmatic structural analysis of interrelated organizations of our motif-elements will again guide the search for differing properties, in particular the mythical dimension of the metaphorical network. Yet while structural analysis can be an important tool on the level of semantics as well as the composition of the mythical drama, it cannot account for the very dynamism of language, which is the most significant characteristic of metaphors. Reference opens in the interactive dynamic process between reader/audience and the text. Metaphors need the interpretive community to become reference towards fundamental orientation, the language event, in which "ontological happening" is brought to speech, in which the metaphor resonates with life experience.[234] The process of uncovering the universal, ideas, categories or values in the encounter with the textual image is essentially rooted in the imaginative capability of the reader/audience who are part of a historical time and space. It means that the reader/audience brings his/her personal being in the world, including the memory of past experience, the experience of the present and conception of a possible future into a dialogue. In this dialogue imagination links the significant in the text with what is perceived as significant in human life in the world. Being in the world thus fundamentally shapes the dialogue with the text.

> In all instances of knowledge, then, in all language-using and all recollecting we are implicitly asserting our physical continuity with the past. However, the past,...., is not over and done with; our past determines how we interpret the present, in the light of the values we ascribe to things, and how we conceive of the future. These human features,

[234] A. N. Wilder "The Rhetoric of Ancient and Modern Apocalyptic" 447.

> our imagination, our memory and our value-system cannot be prised apart; neither can they be separated from our physical existence in time and space. [235]

With our images of *kingdom*, the *woman* and *life and death* we have entered a paradigmatic web of references toward important universal questions, questions concerning human beings in community and the cosmos, in which "ontological happening" is brought to speech.

Central to our textual image of the city is the question of human life in community. The question of humanity in community essentially gives rise to questions of value and meaning: Who are we as human beings? What is the purpose of human life? Why do human beings die? How can existence in space and time be understood? In a biblical context, these questions enfold fundamental human experiences as evil, sinfulness, life and death; they encompass humanity in relation with God. As textual image of the city, the extended metaphor gives rise to thought about possibilities of humanity in community. The metaphor as incentive for reader/audience is an incentive to uncover possible perspectives regarding fundamental questions in human existence.

Mythic Time and Space

Since the referential capacity of metaphors rests on the construction of networking associations originating from the communication between a text and an audience/listener, a metaphor becomes an evocative image if there is some common ground of mutual experiences and beliefs.

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[235] M. Warnock, *Time and Imagination* 170.

The *universal,* the *significant sense*, the *fundamental dimension* is what makes texts interesting throughout time, even if the general historical parameters have changed. It is the enigma of human existence between essential being and historical existence, which is powerfully revealed in the story of great artwork or a textual image as the city. In contrast to historical parameters, history as essential history, as "one ideal history... represents all times,"[236] encompassing past, present and future dimension as essential moments for humanity in the world and cosmos. In this sense, time as mythical time and space as mythical space refer to the cross-sections of human existence. Accordingly, the characters in a metaphorical narrative like the city in the Apocalypse are mythical characters universally representing different possibilities of humanity. The narrative metaphor thus provides models from the world of experience, which in the interactive dynamic encounter with the reader/audience bring to mind fundamental dimensions of humanity in the cosmos.

> Experience is no longer reduced to a present experience; this present was only an instantaneous cross-section in an evolution stretching from an origin to a fulfillment, from a "Genesis" to an "Apocalypse." [237]

The textual image extends the immediate world of reality experience into a world of "ideal history."[238] Ideal history means mythical time and space, in which humanity from its beginning to fulfilment is embraced as one essential history in the universe. In the composition of the textual image differing

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[236] P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* Trans. E. Buchanan. 21.
[237] Ibid. 163.
[238] Ibid. 162.

perspectives on space and time become incentives to imagine past, present, and future possibilities. As incentives to envision the possibility of the heavenly city, the textualized image of the city does not only address community in the world but as metaphor poignantly brings to mind the world of human experience as possibility.

While universal concepts are not constrained to cultural and historical boundaries, they are still substantially shaped by a certain historical tradition. In the Apocalypse, language and formal characteristics of the text are often carved in reminiscence of the prophets of the Old Testament and deeply rooted in the traditions of God's covenant with the people. These are certainly not the only references; yet this chapter will particularly explore the associative force of well-established images in reference to biblical sources, conveying concepts of human experience and existence.

The Power of Metaphorical Language

In contrast to philosophical arguments about the ideal city in antiquity, our text does not offer logical reasoning characteristic of philosophical expression. Yet the same questions about the existential root and purpose of human action and the relation of human beings to the Sacred are contemplated through metaphorical language in our text. As in great art, characters, space and time become models referring towards existential dimensions in human life and society. While philosophical arguments strive for reasoned cognitive concepts, metaphorical language distinctively contributes another dimension, affecting the senses; it provides a powerful motivation to visualize, and appropriate abstract

concepts to life existence to embed the abstract in the visual and affective. Our task will be to explore visualization as appropriation of a metaphorical text, in which the deep enigma involving the status of the creature and the actual modality of human beings is dramatized as story between God and humanity through a textualized image of the city. In this sense, the extended metaphor becomes myth, which as incentive for imagination refers to an absolute reality in relation to a structure of valuation. We will try to uncover fundamental dimensions in our textual image of the city by tracing universal characteristics of our exemplary motifs: the *kingdom,* the *woman* and *life and death.* These fundamental dimensions however are not investigated for their "impact" on biblical traditions, their "eschatological use,"[239] but for their associative capacity and power to incite imaginative thought and visualization. We try to uncover their possible significance for human existence, in our context the bond between humanity and God evoked by the textual image of the city.

[239] In contrast to the *History of Religion School,* our attempt is not to prove the "impact" of traditional images on our text or, as H. Gunkel states in his investigation of the Babylonian material, the "eschatologische Benutzung" (eschatological use). Instead, our purpose of including mythological material is the quest for recurring, fundamental human questions reflected in mythological texts as images that are not constrained to historical, cultural boundaries. Cf. H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* 367.

[7] A. Dürer, *The Babylonian Whore*

(reduced)

4.1. The Kingdom of God and Christ Versus Worldly Community

Dürer in his woodcut *The Babylonian Whore* [7] skilfully creates a scene of confusing chaos to depict the battle between humanity and the heavens in the Apocalypse dramatized as artistic picture.[240] In the woodcut, the cries of war, the forces to kill and destroy, the forces of enticement, sorrow, evil, wonder, astonishment, anger, solemnity, even serenity all seem to be unleashed at once. Dürer's woodcut captures essential history in a violent composition. Humanity appears as concrete universal manifested in the various characters of the picture. This means, the historical fact that the model for the whore actually was a Venetian woman, a courtesan, looses its relevance. In the composition, the courtesan takes on universal characteristics. Her essential beauty, her ability to entice the merchants and powerful people, to lure them into admiration and adoration become characteristics evocative of human sinfulness! She is no longer the figure of history but a part in the drama of the Apocalypse. In Dürer's woodcut, as in the textual image of the city, the harlot becomes a metaphor for the darker possibilities of human identity.

The brutal beast with its seven fantastically fierce heads, all shaped individually, one surpassing the other in its cruel expression, has never existed and will never exist as pictured. Visualizing the beast in the Apocalypse, the artist epitomizes as mythical image the forces of evil that pervade the world but

[240] [7] Dürer, *Apocalypse: The Babylonian Whore.* 1947. Woodcut, 394 x 281mm.

often elude immediate rationalization in language or objectification in visual arts. The beast as mythical character gives form to adverse forces experienced in human existence, forces that pose a seemingly unsurpassable hindrance in the battle for fulfilment of human existence. Yet there is another power, still in the distance but on its way to enter the war against the forces of evil. An army from heaven with horsemen is coming out of the clouds, while an angel announces the final destruction of Babylon. The forces unleashed in these images are the forces that picture a war encompassing the whole universe. It is a war in which the mythological characters represent potential forces as participant fighters in which space becomes essential space.

The text of the Apocalypse does not mention the monk who piously adores the courtesan among the merchants and powerful whom their clothes unveil as people of Dürer's own medieval world. They also become universal characters in the mythical battle between earth and the heavens. The present historical world is not excluded from the dramatic fight for the ideal city. Humanity was, is and will be part of the battle. Time in this context is essential time. Space becomes essential space in Dürer's interpretation.

As visualization of the whore Babylon, the picture captures essential history for the community of human beings. The city, Babylon, burning, flames firing towards heaven, undoubtedly is the medieval city. The medieval community, as any community ruled by the queen Babylon and the beast, is at the brink of ultimate destruction. With her, those who are Babylon's admirers, participants of her power and wealth, will ultimately find death. The burning city epitomizes the end of the war that is imminent between heaven and the earth. The angel holding the millstone foresees the ultimate destruction of

Babylon's failure, saying: "With such violence will Babylon, the great city, be thrown and will never be found anymore" (18:21). At this ultimately decisive moment, war is imminent between the forces of evil and the followers of the Lamb, the rider "True and Faithful" (Rev 19:11). Hope carries the vision for the victory of the heavens, the new city, God among humanity.

Combat Myth

In Dürer's woodcut [7], the war between heaven and earth holds centre stage, visually exploring a theme, which, as Adela Yarbro Collins in her work[241] shows, has roots in the traditional mythological motif of the combat myth. According to her analysis, the ancient combat myth as cosmic struggle for kingship serves as important framework for major images and narrative patterns in the book of Revelation, in particular in the chapters 13 and 17. Adela Yarbro Collins specifically interprets its historical message by identifying the beast in Revelation as the Roman Empire in general and the emperor Nero in particular.[242] We would like to extend this interpretation in two directions. In this chapter, we will not primarily investigate the most likely historical context in antiquity but focus instead on universal perspectives evoked through the symbolic struggle for kingship, its universal significance in the context of our metaphor of the city. We will also especially direct our attention to the city Babylon, the queen, and her role in that combat.

The structural analysis has provided us with an insight into the artful, at times peculiar composition of the motif of the *kingdom*, characterizing royal

[241] A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation.*
[242] Ibid. 184.

identity and authority of God, the Lamb and his followers in contrast the queen, Babylon, and her people. Paul Ricoeur, in his analysis, *Symbolism of Evil,* offers some intriguing perspectives concerning the role of the king, a traditional concept firmly incorporated in mythological narratives.[243] Ricoeur argues that the mythological narrative struggle about kingship goes back to the theogonic re-enactment of the drama of the creation myth.[244] In the combat myth, the war between the forces of the gods (God) and evil is essentially a symbolic re-enactment of the victory of order over chaos.[245] In the mythical narrative of combat, the enigma of a good creation and a world characterized through evil, suffering and death is signified through symbolic language.[246] The narrative combat myth calls to mind the fundamental friction between the essential being (state of innocence in a good creation) and historical existence:

> it is the myth as narration that puts the present experience of fault into relation with the totality of meaning. On the other hand, this total meaning, which is the background of fault, is linked to the primordial drama by the mythical consciousness. [247]

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[243] P. Ricoeur develops his investigation of myths of the beginning and the end of evil through an analysis of myth from the Sumero-Babylonian culture, the biblical tradition and the Greco-Roman world. He states:

> ...one cannot explicate these relations in "depth" in the bosom of our memory without bringing the "lateral" relations to light also. For example, it is impossible today to understand the Hebrew source without placing its beliefs and its institutions in the framework of the culture of the ancient Middle East, for it repeats some of the fundamental themes of that culture (by direct borrowing, by reference to common sources, or in virtue of the parallelism of material and cultural conditions), and above all it modifies some others profoundly.

The Symbolism of Evil Trans. E. Buchanan. 21.

[244] A valuable discussion on Near Eastern material is still I. Engnell's study of the image of divine kingship in the traditions of ancient Egyptian, Sumero-Accadian, Hittite and West Semitic traditions. See: *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, rep. 1967).

[245] Ibid. 232-278.

[246] Ibid. esp. 175-278.

[247] P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* Trans. E. Buchanan. 171.

Accordingly, in the context of our metaphor, the combat myth signifies the fundamental discordance of human existence evoking the primordial drama of the creation story. In the midst of this warfare the queen Babylon reigns as epitome of pride, distress and diabolic temptation, presenting herself as vital participant in this forceful battle. Within this struggle, the references to God's act of creation (e.g. Rev 21:6; 2:7; 22:1,2,14,19) and the dominant role of the beast are constant reminders of the beginning, which is an essential part of the present and future in the Apocalypse. Evoked by the image of combat is therefore not only a particular historical parameter in time and space but war as fundamental conflict between the forces of good and evil, a war, which takes on cosmic dimensions in the Apocalypse.

Echo of Cosmic War Here and Now

As cosmic drama this war is intrinsically tied to humanity at the present moment here, Bloch's "Now" of existence.[248] The figures of the king, queen and kingship contribute the topics of power and authority to the abstract mythological image of the cosmic battle.[249] Cosmological symbolism becomes intrinsically interwoven with historicity and the problem of evil among human beings. On the mythical level as in our textual image, history and fundamental references are not separated. To textually visualize the war thus allows the conscious realization of forces behind the historical reality in which evil history

[248] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight 287-95.
[249] S. D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University 1974) 51-60.

Babylon's claim for royalty is not only an expression of her hubris but situates her as a vital participant amidst the context of combat between God, Christ and the forces of evil (Rev. 17:14-17). With the image of the woman, the war is not taking place beyond the frontiers of humanity, beyond the frontiers of history and the world. The queen riding the beast situates humanity amidst the war. Evil visually takes on bodily characteristics. An abstract concept can come alive in imaginative textual visualization. Lost is the distant story, which has no significance for reader/audience.

Included in this mythical combat are all those over whom the "queen" exercises her power: the kings of the earth (Rev 17:2, 18:3), "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (Rev 17:15), demons, foul spirits, every foul and hateful bird (Rev 18:2) and the merchants of the earth (Rev 18:3). The kings, the merchants, the seafarers, all inhabitants of Babylon are participants in the war between a good creation and a world characterized through evil, suffering and death.

In addition, a vital participant in the war is Jezebel (Rev 2:20) bringing about the memory of the Old Testament wife of king Ahab, who became the model for Canaanite cultic and political practices promoting Phoenician alliances and religion (1 Kgs 19:2). The reference to Israel's past, as memory of events that helped shape Israel's identity as a people, that shaped their covenant relationship with God, includes characteristic figures like Jezebel. The name Jezebel in the Apocalypse serves as reminder to those events associating the past with cultic and political practices of the inhabitants of Babylon. As Jezebel in the Old Testament is accused of being the woman who deceives Ahab to violate

the Lord's kingship in going after false gods, the teachings of the prophetess in Thyatira beguile the servants of Christ "to practice immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols" (Rev 2:20). Jezebel, as mythic figure reveals past experiences in their significance for members in the community in Thyatira. In the context of cosmic battle, Jezebel and the harlot Babylon refer to a claim for authority, which is contending for royalty against the one who is truly king, God. Jezebel, as mythic figure opens perspectives on violations against God's community that ultimately mean destruction, Nothingness, death. Participation in the war takes on a human body in the community in Thyatira, becomes visible in historic time and space.

The members of the seven communities are encouraged to become active participants in the battle. The verb νικάω (conquer) throughout the text and especially in the recurring references "anyone who conquers..." (Rev 2:26 et. al.) associates the mythological combat with the situation of the seven communities. The recurring admonition to "conquer" serves as another distinctive mark to envision this cosmic war within the boundaries of this world, fought amidst the communities on earth here and now. Here is the reason why the throne of Satan (Rev 2:13 also 2:24) and the synagogue of Satan (Rev 2:9 sim. 3:9) are dangerous for the seven communities. This is why the members need to be on guard in the conquest against the evil adversary of God and Christ. Conquering therefore includes the active involvement in the creation of a new community, in which the promise of the beginning is ultimately fulfilled, is a new creation (Rev 2:7, 17). It includes the vision of a royal community (Rev 2:28; 3:21, 2:26, 27), a community that is God among the people (Rev 3:12), life (Rev 2:11). Humanity, pictured in the context of mythic combat means that the cosmological

symbolism of the combat myth centres amidst the battle within community of human beings.[251]

Spectacle of War

As Dürer knew in his artistic representation, the metaphorical composition in the Apocalypse evokes the visualization of a spectacular scene. Metaphorical language inspires imaginative visualization of a stunning drama between the forces of evil and the army of heaven with human beings as participating warriors on earth. In this mythological drama, the readers/audience are not mere spectators but participants in the front lines of the battle. The physical war brings an abstract concept, the enigma between evil and God, to history and transforms the reader/audience into participants in the worldly drama in their imaginative appropriation of the spectacle. The cosmic war dramatizes the possibility that humanity fails to participate in God's victory, thus creating

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[251] A. Y. Collins emphasizes the role of holy war traditions functioning as the mythic context in which the historical situation of the members of the seven Churches can be understood:

> The Revelation to John makes use of holy war traditions to interpret the situation of its first readers. In doing so it advocates passive resistance...The faithful are to suffer persecution and death in the present....The value of the martyr's death is greatly enhanced by the example of Christ (256).

A. Y. Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John" *JBL* 96 (1977): 241-56

Adela Yarbro Collins rightly draws attention to the paradigmatic historical relevance of mythical war. Yet the text does not only provide an explanation for Christians in the second century in some Churches in Asia Minor. Exactly because the text has its foundation in mythical tradition, it can refer to differing conflicts for human beings in history. Interestingly, Adela Yarbro Collins herself does not avoid contemporary contextualisation in her use of
Mahatma Ghandi's expression "passive resistance." E.g. M. Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)* (New York: Schocken Books 1961).

Babylon. In that sense, the destruction of the city is not only reference to the physical destruction of the city at a certain point in history, it metaphorically opens the possibility of ultimate death, Nothingness for human beings. In the language of myth, this is the possibility of absolute defeat in the battle. The abyss of evil that has been conquered in creation is pictured in its significance for humanity in the world. As mythic reference, it unveils human beings, created in the image of God (Gen 1:26) as caught amidst the enigma of a good creation and the possibility of choosing the side of the beast and the harlot. The queen Babylon, as reference to humanity in community, unveils the mythological drama of creation in its significance for the whole history of humanity. Likewise, the battle as reference to God's victory over chaos also manifests the hope that human beings possibly will not find destruction as city Babylon but become the city of God.

The Drama of Hope

Our structural analysis also provides us with important insights regarding the kingship of God and the Lamb. The symbolic paradigm of the king who wages war against his enemies, who reigns powerfully over his people and carries his victory, sets the stage for imaginative appropriation.[252] Dürer was certainly not the only artist to be inspired by the violent images of war and the colourful descriptions of the satanic evil powers and their followers. The imagery of raging war has become the signature of the book of Revelation. Yet

[252] An example presents the cruel image of the banquet (Rev 19:17-18) in reference to Ezek 39:17-20, the sacrificial feast of the birds and beasts on the flesh of the mighty, following the eschatological battle. See A. Y. Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* 227.

horrific battles and bloodthirsty enemies are only part of the spectacle. The metaphorical language evokes a bizarre scenario of combat in the anti-king. At the height of the battle, the king who is the Lamb ultimately conquers the forces of evil. Victory is gained through humanity and weakness in the Son of God (Rev 2:18), the Lamb (Rev 5:6, 22:1, 3 et. al.). Metaphorical language disturbs sure expectation and invites to imaginative thought. The human suffering of the king as the Lamb urges to look at history becoming real at the point when evil powers seem to gain victory. Evoked is the central belief in God's freedom, proclaimed in Israel since the exodus,[253] the belief that justice and new life emerge through the critical and energizing powers of discontinuity and genuine breaks. That the Lamb shares the agony of his followers (Rev 3:14) is therefore not only a re-enactment of the drama of combat but the moment when myth and history essentially meet. It is here at the height of the battle that God as king is visible as the suffering human being. It is here that the divine and human meet in the holy God who is also the God of compassion.[254] It is here that salvation is anticipated as the possible new community. It is here that the great city's judgment has come in one hour (Rev 18:10). It is here that a radically alternative kingdom, the heavenly city, emerges where grief, slavery, oppression, complete destitution and death are finally uprooted. It is here and only here, that the ones who suffer "oppression and destitution" can be called "rich" (Rev 2:9) and that faithfulness "unto death" will earn "the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). It is here that the promise of sharing the throne with the Son and the Father gives the

[253] Regarding the "energizing power" of the exodus experience see: W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1978) 11-43.
[254] Regarding a theology of pathos see A. J. Heschel, *The Prophets*. vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row 1971) 1-11.

perspective of a kingdom without mourning, crying, pain or death: which is God's home among his people (Rev 21:3-4). The possibility that the Lamb with the followers has conquered is the hope awaiting the heavenly Jerusalem.

The images of the king and queen are therefore parts of the mythological combat narrative in which human beings participate in one "essential history" from the beginning to fulfilment. The focus of this "essential history" is not on the temporality of successive events but on the cross-section between perdition and salvation of humanity and historical existence. Just as the unresolved battle in Dürer's woodcut [7], the textual image calls to mind the drama of creation as mythological story about the origin of evil and the origin of a good creation in its significance for humanity here and now. In that sense, the war includes the drama of humanity itself as freedom to choose evil, to choose absolute Nothingness. Nevertheless, also apparent in the fragmentary image is the promise of God's victory over chaos causing hunger for the heavenly Jerusalem, a hunger that brings back the not yet fulfilled promise of creation.[255]

[255] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight 70-75.

[8]

Lambeth Apocalypse, Ms. 209 fol. 32

The Marriage Feast of the Lamb

ecimus decimus octauus.

Et auditum est nocte media magne
et sit nocte aquarie mulieres et sit
nocem vocem unius magnorum dicē
tium alia. qui rogabant deus noster
omnipotens. Gaudeamus et exultemus et
demus gloriam ei quia venerunt nup
tie agni et uxor eius preparauit se: et
datum est ei ut cooperiat se byssino splē
dens candidum. Byssinum enim iusti
ficationes sunt sanctor. Vicesimus.

Et audiui quasi vocē turbe magne
et. Sanctus libri huius sepe demon
strat omnem electorum multitudi
nem in septē partes se diuidendam:
si ei unusquisque suum studium et exer
citium. Iusti magi qui amore diuinū

fuerunt ad primam vitam illi q post di
luuiū usq quo lex data et ad secundā pu
nē sunt sepe iam demonstratum. sicut
iamq aliam legē habuerunt nisi tamē
solum. id est dilectionē dei et proximi. Nec
enim unusquisque illum se debere timere
et super omnia diligere a quo amat et qui e
mi et unde subsidia ministrat et nulli
se debere facere quē non vult aliquo pa
cifice legem. nullus qui sane meminit
et ignorare putatur. Paucos igitur
multos: electi qui amore dilectionis usq
ad illud tempus quo lex data et designat.
Vocem emiserunt: quia et precibus
nos fuerunt doctrinam. quos tamen potue
runt a suis erroribus retrocauerunt.

For modern eyes, the "Marriage Feast of the Lamb" [8] in the Lambeth Apocalypse is a rather striking miniature, in which the intimate relation between the Lamb and the bride is pictured as gentle affection.[256] The table is set for the marriage feast. Wine is provided for the celebrating guests. Yet the occasion is not an ordinary wedding at all. The image is a metaphor for possibilities of humanity in relation with God. John, the prophet, perceives the ongoing festivities as part of God's history with human beings. An angel blowing a trumpet and thundering voices pronounce God's reign, proclaiming its universal significance for humanity and the cosmos:

> "Alleluia: for our God the Almighty hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has prepared herself." (Rev 19:6-7) [257]

The bride, embracing and kissing the Lamb, places humanity in the centre of God's kingdom. Marriage is no longer the historical, physical event; marriage becomes the symbol for the covenant, which in the Apocalypse is the covenant between God and his people. It is strikingly pictured as the relation between the Son of God, the Lamb and the bride. For the medieval reader/audience, educated to see the image as reflection of the power of God, the kiss between the bride and the Lamb provided a powerful sign of a spiritual reality. Medieval sensibility in this sense was fundamentally different from our modern perspectives on visual arts.

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[256] [8] Lambeth Palace Library. *The Lambeth Apocalypse,* Ms. 209. fol. 32. (Library photo, with permission).
[257] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.

> It involved rather an apprehension of all of the relations, imaginative and supernatural, subsisting between the contemplated object and a cosmos which opened on to the transcendent. It meant discerning in the concrete object an ontological reflection of, and participation in, the being and the power of God.[258]

Today, we are no longer able to read the image in this integrated manner, in which biblical text; culture, religion, beliefs and values are one, in which signs apprehend the reality of God. However, the bizarre visualization of the marriage couple in the miniature certainly incites thoughts about the significance of a potent metaphor in the Apocalypse. We might have lost the world in which the images of the Apocalypse have their granted place in the order of the world and universe. Yet as provocation to think and imagine, the marriage metaphor is not lacking power at all. It prods us to envision a possible future that is fulfilment of community. In the context of the textual image of the city, it is part of the "fragmentary," which calls a critical reader/audience to evaluate and choose whether to become the harlot or the bride. As antithesis to the harlot, the image of the bride opens hope for future fulfilment at the abyss of absolute Nothingness.

[258] U. Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* 15.

4.2. The City as Woman or the Question of Purity, Defilement and Sinfulness

> Like the basic emotion of hunger, which primarily burrows into itself, all emotions are therefore primarily states of self; and precisely as these states of self, they are the most active intentions. But, because they are concerned with themselves, the life of emotions is not only a most closely intensive, eminently intending into itself, it is also the mode of being of what Kierkegaard once called existential. In other words: only the 'feeling mind' as the essence of mental feelings, has become an 'existential' concept, one of 'affectedness', not the theoretical-objective 'intellect'.[259]

The metaphor of the woman in the Apocalypse is a powerfully evocative image because it arouses the senses in a most direct manner.[260] It causes imaginative sympathy or antipathy, aversion or attraction. In this context, textual imagination is embracing 'affectedness' and "a 'feeling mind' as essence of mental feelings." The metaphor of the woman provocatively carries within itself the potential to reveal existential dimensions in human life because it causes "hunger" not merely on a theoretical-objective but on an emotional level as well. The metaphor affects the 'feeling mind,' thus enhancing imaginative appropriation of the text to life experience.

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[259] E. Bloch, *Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight 71.

[260] For an extended discussion on the tradition of the woman as city see E. McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities. Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*; also: J. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel. The City as Yahweh's Wife.*

With the female characters as central participants in the mythological, primordial pattern of the cosmological combat between God and the forces of evil, humanity receives lively faces in the battle, bodies touching the senses. Calling to mind life experience, the image of the woman as city portrays humanity in its twofold "nature" between its original destination, created in the image of God and its human modality, characterized by the freedom to choose otherwise. This duality in human nature, which essentially has its roots in the freedom of human beings to decide against the relation with God, becomes a sensual experience in the bride and harlot, their portrayals embodying values, conveying the ethical structure of freedom.

Knowledge of Good and Evil

The harlot Babylon as vital participant in the decisive cosmic war between the forces of good and evil, recalls the mythological beginning of being in the world, the moment, in which humanity lost its state of innocence gaining the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 3:1-24). Her body metaphorically pictures humanity in its state of lost innocence, humanity as participating in the battle against God:

> the fall is the caesura cutting across everything that makes man human; everything-sexuality and death, work and civilization, culture and ethics-depends on both a primordial nature, lost but yet still lying there underneath, and an evil which, although radical, is nonetheless contingent.[261]

[261] P. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* Trans. E. Buchanan. 250.

In this sense, the harlot Babylon portrays the fall in its significance for humanity at any moment in history. Evoked as well is its significance for humanity's possible future. The memory of the fall opens the prospect of ultimate failure in relation to God, which is as well humanity's failure in community. The image of the harlot thus, utilizing the metaphor of the woman as city as a versatile expression for human possibilities, incorporates the essential life experience of human sinfulness in history. In this context, Babylon's sins that "have piled up to heaven" (Rev 18:5) gain immeasurable dimensions!

Infinite Desire and Temptation

Certain prophetic texts (e.g. Jer 16:9; cf. Isa 61:10) offer graphic descriptions for the violation of God's covenant with the people. Marriage violation becomes the epitome of sinfulness. In reference to the fall, the origin of the marriage metaphor is rooted in the beginning of God's history with humanity. The covenant between God and his people, understood in analogy to the mutual obligation in a marriage agreement in Israel, is a possibility for humanity, which can be fulfilled or rejected. The biblical texts are eloquent witnesses to a long history of covenant violations, often vividly pictured as adultery (Hos 2:1-23, Ezek 16:1-63). Too often, the people favoured another lover either in their cultic preferences by worshipping other gods, or by choosing inappropriate alliances with foreign political powers. These foreign political alliances always carried the seeds for idolatry (Ezek 23:6-9). Accordingly, the metaphor of the harlot by analogy between idolatry and

adultery refers to the infringement of the covenantal loyalty of exclusive fidelity to Yahweh. Apparent is the concept of sin per se as an aspect of life experience.

The graphic depiction of Babylon's harlotry denoting the violation of the people's relation to God thus encompasses chaos itself, which has its origin in the choice of betraying the offer of God's relation with humanity. The "mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" (Rev 17:5), accused of her sexual immorality, not only epitomizes human evil and communal evil itself as desire to break the relation with the creator and take possession herself, but also gives it the human face of a woman, a face that might be loved or hated. In her unlimited desire for power, she ultimately becomes deceiving temptation:

> the kings of the earth have committed immorality, and with the wine[262] of whose immorality the ones living on earth have become drunk (Rev 17:2 also Rev 17:4, 18:3,9).

The intoxicating effect of wine denotes the alliance of human beings with the harlot, an alliance that destroys the conjugal bond with God. Drunkenness becomes a sign of rebellion against God's covenant. Moreover, since the colour of wine evokes the image of blood, the "wine of her passionate immoral longing" also refers back to the stain of blood as original symbol of defilement (Lev 20:9-18). The play on words suggests her impurity as harlot, which marks her as being outside of the conjugal bond with God.[263]

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[262] Regarding symbolic references of wine, see B. L. Bandstra, "Wine" in: G. W. Bromiley ed. et. al. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* vol. 4 (1068-72). In Deut 29:6 it is said that wine was denied to the Israelites in the wilderness that they could recognize God as their Lord.

[263] See P. Ricoeur *The Symbolism of Evil* Trans. E. Buchanan. 25-46.

The "wine of her passionate immoral longing" (τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς) bring to mind the image of a woman whose evil identity appears as infinite desire (Rev 18:3). The original Greek meaning of the word θυμός, which essentially means the principle of life, as strong feeling and passion of soul or mind,[264] is used in an elaborate play on words. It is the harlot's passionate longing which leads the kings of the earth, the merchants and all the nations into destruction. Also evoked is God's judgment of sin, expressed with similar images in Rev 16:1 "the seven bowls of the passionate longing of God" (ἐκχέετε τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ), an image deeply rooted in Old Testament tradition (Ezek 23:31-33). Differing possible nuances of meaning for θυμός, describing the heart as seat of the emotions, joy or grief but also wrath and defiling desire or inclination,[265] are used to characterize analogously the relation between God, the harlot and the kings of the earth, merchants and the nations. God's "passionate" love for the human being, which includes God's "impatience with evil,"[266] is wrath and judgment of sin. A strong emphasis on God's Holiness has often led some to neglect this dimension of biblical belief, which characterizes most strongly God's intimate relation with the human being. Yet God's compassion does not desert the human being in the situation of sinfulness, guilt and suffering, compassion most strikingly describes God's personal involvement.

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[264] See θυμός in: Lidell-Scott-Jones, *Lexicon of Classical Greek* (unabridged) (Oxford: Oxford University 1968). [Online] Available: G. R. Crane ed. *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, March, 1997 File: Greek Lexica; comp. Plat. *Crat.* 419.

[265] Ibid. θυμός.

[266] Ibid. A. Heschel, *The Prophets* vol. 2 (63).

> The predicament of man is the predicament of God Who has a stake in the human situation. Sin, guilt, suffering, cannot be separated from the divine situation. The life of sin is more than a failure of man; it is a frustration to God...The essential meaning of pathos is, therefore, not to be seen in its psychological denotation, as standing for a state of the soul, but in its theological connotation, signifying God as involved in history. [267]

Passion going astray in infinite desire is the essential violation, which brings about the infringement of the covenantal bond and the harlot's judgment: "God remembered Babylon, the great, to give her the cup of passionate longing of God's anger." (Rev 16:19). Imaging the conjugal bond thus means to grasp the existence of good and evil through images that do not remain abstract. Exploration of essential dimensions in life begins as sensing the significant in human life, as 'mental feeling'.

Eve

The harlot's deceitfulness makes her passionate immoral longing most dangerous. Her appearance, "covered with gold, jewellery, and priceless stone, and pearls" (Rev 17:4 cf. 18:23),[268] pretends her to be like the bride, the heavenly city (cf. Rev 21:11, 18, 21). Seeing her, even the prophet John marvels greatly (Rev 17:6), and her fascination captures the nations including the most powerful people on earth, the kings (Rev 18:3, 9-10) and the merchants (Rev 18:3). In her infinite desire and deception, the harlot in the book of Revelation

[267] Ibid. 6.
[268] Cf. Ezek 16:11-13 where jewellery is a token of God's love and sign for Jerusalem's royal status.

essentially is the person who symbolizes evil choice and fascinating temptation. That these sinful characteristics are referring to the satanic power of evil itself is pictured in the woman's relation to the beast: "I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast" (Rev 17:3). Similarly, in her claim to be queen, the woman participates in the infinite yearning of the beast to conquer the "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev 17:14), in the passion to become divine. Here, in the woman "desire" becomes the epitome of the human desire to surpass being as created, to become infinite like God. The harlot in her desire to take possession of everything therefore acts like "Eve" (Gen 3:1-24), transgressing the boundaries of the relationship with God while entering into a new bond, the relationship to the beast. Essential history of the fall appears as a critical dimension for humanity, not only as past event but also in its significance for the here and now of reality and the future. Disgust with Babylon as 'mental feeling' is at the root for change and carries the potential to arouse hunger for another woman, another community, the bride.

In this sense, the physical characteristics of the female assist in the progression from abstract concepts to inner perception. The metaphor of the woman moves sensation, the striving, and the hunger that motivates imaginative creative thought and action. Throughout history, there is probably no other metaphor, in which representation and symbolic references are more difficult to distinguish. The metaphor of the woman is so versatile and powerful, exactly because physical sexuality reaches far beyond the mere abstract mental concept into the existential.

Humanity's Relation with God

The figure of the woman, in her universal characterization, is the community, the great city. Her description as the defiled woman thus associates her with the fundamental ruin of everything essential in human life. This includes human life itself, civilization, compassion, failure, impurity, defilement, sinfulness in the relation between God and human beings. With the referential perspective of the harlot as the great city, the metaphor not only refers to the cultic aspect of the infringement of the covenant obligation to God but comes to connote the identity of the community. The characteristic of the deceiving woman is a reference to human beings in historical community which destroys the covenant relation with God and therefore loses its own identity, which, in the language of the Apocalypse, is the destruction of Babylon.

In this sense, the metaphor opens multifaceted perspectives that refer to the integration of mythological narratives and historicity. The past, as history between God and his people is not only connoted in the mythological beginning but in essential historical moments in Israel's history, which is also the history of Christianity. The woman is Babylon, a city whose inhabitants attempted to build a tower towards the heavens (Gen 11:1-9), a city characterized by pride and glory (Isa 13:19). She is also "Sodom and Egypt where their [the two witnesses'] Lord was crucified" (Rev 11:8), referring to traditional symbols for moral corruption (e.g. Gen 18:16 ff.) and oppression (Exod 1:1 ff.). "Sodom and Egypt" are symbolic representatives of evil power, the essential force responsible for the suffering and death of Christ. Babylon's sins (ἁμαρτίαι)[269]

[269] The Greek word ἁμαρτίαι can be used in a twofold characteristic for the woman: as error of judgment (Heb 3:13) as well as sinfulness as ontological

that "have reached unto heaven" (Rev 18:5) thus reveal a multifaceted picture of humanity's participation in the "abyss" of evil which essentially is the rupture of the original destination of the human being in the covenantal relationship with God. It is the replacement of the covenant in favour of worldly finite powers. In that sense, the harlot as 'Eve' becomes the mirror for every human being, for every community violating the mutual covenant with God. The memory of the past thus provides the path to understand humanity here and now and in its future possibility.[270]

City and Identity

Yet in contrast to Ezekiel's use of the metaphor of the woman, in which the city above all depicts the defilement and destruction of the temple,[271] the city in the book of Revelation quintessentially refers to the city/state as community of human beings. The textual image of the city in the Apocalypse places the focus on the identity of the community as community in relation with the beast (Rev 17:3) or God and the Lamb. Therefore, the concluding vision is not a new temple but a new community, the city of God (Rev 21:1 ff). Babylon's sins, which are the sins of the great city's inhabitants, universally refer to the failure to create a living community in the world (Rev 18:4). The inhabitants, who are building on or destroying the covenantal relationship with God, are freely choosing the alliance with the beast or the conjugal bond with the Lamb, the Son

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condition of the self assertive human being (Rom 5:12 comp. Aristot. *Nic. Eth.* 1148a).

[270] M. Warnock, *Time and Imagination* 87-108.

[271] J. Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel. The City as Yahweh's Wife* 61-88.

of God. They are choosing community. In this sense, the conduct of human beings either will cause the lament over the destruction of Babylon or will make them citizens in the heavenly Jerusalem, "the home of God among human beings" (Rev 21:3).

In the metaphor of the woman, the city appears as the personal dimension of humanity's sinfulness, which is the fundamental cause for the building or destruction of the city community. Accusations against idolatry as references to the infringement of the conjugal bond with the Lamb, the Son of God, epitomize sinfulness for any human being. Idolatry as abstract phenomenon is embodied in community. Jezebel, who is accused of sorcery, and teaching members of the community in Thyatira to practice immorality, to eat food sacrificed to idols incorporates the sinfulness of Babylon (Rev 18:23).[272] Imaginative appropriation allows seeing the cosmic significance of humanity's failure. In Rom 1:22-23, 25 Paul refers to the guilt of human beings constructing a similar analogy as can be found in the imagery of the Apocalypse. "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or beasts or creeping animals...they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and venerated and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator."[273] Idolatry, according to Paul, is the glorification of images, worship of the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25). Is not Paul's argumentation in Rom 1:22-23,25 reminiscent of the figures of Jezebel, and the harlot Babylon? Is therefore not the quintessential failure of Jezebel her teaching, which replaces God's holiness and the

[272] The objects of idolatry could be many e.g. celestial bodies (Deut 4:19, 2 Kgs 17:16 et. al.); gods of Egypt (Exod 12:12); golden calf (Exod 32:4).

covenantal relationship with the connection to mortal beings? Similarly, does not the warning to the community in Laodicea "you are the miserable one, pitiable and poor and blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me... white garments that you may clothe yourself and that may not be seen the shameful deeds of your nakedness " (Rev 3:17-8) symbolically refer to the same reality, namely exchanging the truth about God for a lie by worshipping themselves rather than the Creator? Accordingly, does fornication not symbolically characterize impurity and failure of powerful people in the communities who replace their relation to God and the Lamb with their relation to the wealthy harlot, Babylon? Clothing in Near Eastern mythical texts is an important symbol of status. Throughout history, it signifies the social setting of human beings as urbanized, the civilized status in contrast to pre-civilized and pre-urbanized life. Clothing also functions as firm distinction between humans and the divine.[274] Accordingly, does not Babylon's nakedness (Rev 17:16) unveil her real uncivilized character as city, which is essentially the sinfulness of her inhabitants?

We have argued that the image of the harlot in her "desire" to take possession of everything brings to mind the memory of "Eve" (Gen 3:1-24). The harlot, transgressing the boundaries of the relationship with God, enters a new bond, a bond that ultimately is the relationship to the beast. Moreover, her

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[273] Trans. Eva Maria Räpple.

[274] R. A. Oden, *The Bible Without Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1987) 92-105.

power derives from the evil power of the beast: "I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast" (Rev 17:3).[275] The woman sitting on the beast resonates with the coalition of evil powers in Gen 3:1 ff, the power of the serpent and the power of human sinfulness. This is the embodiment of the power of evil taking over the reality of the world with humanity as vital participant. An abyss opens as possibility, which causes absolute fear, disgust, and dissatisfaction with the reality of Babylon here and now, crystallized in the memory of 'Eve' consciously realized as identity of the harlot. Antipathy to the harlot raises the counter expectation, the wish to break into a different reality, beyond Babylon. Aroused is the hunger to reach out for Paradise lost, for the heavenly city.

The Bride and the Lamb

The drama of humanity revealed as the harlot would be hopeless without the metaphor of the city as bride. The metaphor of the marriage between the bride and the Lamb, celebrated by the artist in the Lambeth Apocalypse [8], opens another possibility for humanity. Relation with God holds within the promise of fulfilment of a new beginning. While there is the possibility of absolute denial, failure, Nothingness, humanity is also free to choose the city of God. In contrast to the graphically pictured harlot, the bride is barely visible as individual woman in the Apocalypse. Her clothes of fine linen are the deeds of the holy ones (Rev 19:7). Her purity places her in absolute contrast to the defilement of the harlot. Prepared "as a bride, made beautiful for her husband prepared and adorned for her husband" (Rev 21:2) her relation with the Lamb is

[275] The word κάθηµαι in this context, meaning "sitting on a throne," refers symbolically to the kingly power and dominion of the beast; see also Rev 18:7.

the moment awaiting the beginning of a new life. The revelation of the bride, as textual image, is a fragment of possibility. The reader/audience, of course, can imagine the bride, knowing who she is not, namely the harlot. Her identity shining in her pure adornments and clothing, emerges from the negative possibility of the harlot. If Babylon is the epitome of infinite desire, defilement and sinfulness, the bride opens a new story, a renewed relation with God, essentially the antithesis to the figure of the harlot.

However, the promise of the marriage between the Lamb and the bride, epitomizing the future as the possibility of a new community, the city of God has not reached fulfilment yet. The celebrated moment of marriage is still a vision, a hope to become reality. It still is a task for humanity to imagine all its potentiality; it is a task to work on. It is a task since the moment humanity lost its innocence, lost the paradise of a good creation. Since gaining the knowledge of good and evil, humanity is caught in the conflict to choose between God's Holiness and the abyss of Nothingness. In the dominant portrayal of Babylon in the Apocalypse, the enigma of humanity threatens to stay unresolved. It is here, when victory for the forces of evil seems to be imminent that God appears involved personally. In the figure of the Son of God, the Lamb, God breaks into history, participating in the battle in which humanity is caught. The struggle for the creation of the city of God is taking place as struggle among human beings, a struggle, in which God participates in the marriage between the Lamb and the bride. In this sense, the artist of the Lambeth Apocalypse pictures the marriage between the Lamb and the bride as a moment of close affection, in an image that engages the 'feeling mind'. In the Lamb, God is most personally involved in the drama of humanity. The drama becomes part of human history with the

reader/audience as main participants. Affectedness evokes mental and artistic images, and motivates appropriation to life experience.

[9]

Lambeth Apocalypse, Ms. 209 fol. 38 v.

The River of Living Water

Tractus septime visionis.

Hec ostendit mihi fluuium aq̃ uitæ splendidũ tanq̃m crystallũ procedẽtẽ de sede dei & agni. in medio plateæ ei⁹. & ex utraq; parte fluuiorum lignũ uitæ. afferẽs fructus. xij. per menses singulos. reddẽs fructum suum & folia ligni ad sanitatẽ gentium. & hec maledicti nõ erũt amplius & sedes dei & agni in illa erũt. & serui ei⁹ seruient illi. & uidebunt faciem eius. & nomen ei⁹ in frontibus eorũ. & nox ultra nõ erit. & nõ egebunt lumine lucerne neq; lumine solis quia dñs deus illuminabit illos. & regnabunt in secula seculorum. Et dixit mihi. Hec uerba fidelissima & uera sunt. & dñs deus spirituum prophetarum misit angelum suum ostendere seruis suis que oportet fieri cito. & ecce uenio uelociter. Beatus qui custodit uerba prophetie libri huius. Et ego Iohannes qui audiui & uidi hec.

Et cum audissem & uidissem. fleui ante pedes angeli qui mihi hec ostendebat. & dicit mihi. Vide ne feceris conseruus tuus sum & fratrum tuorum prophetarum & eorum qui seruant uerba libri huius. Deum adora. Et dicit mihi. Ne signaueris sermones prophetie libri huius. tempus enim prope est. Qui nocet nocere non desinat. & qui in sordibus est sordescat adhuc. & iustus iustificetur adhuc. Ecce uenio cito. & merces mea mecum est. reddere unicuique secundum opera sua. Ego sum alpha & o. primus & nouissimus. principium & finis. Beati qui lauant stolas suas in sanguine agni. ut sit potestas eorum in ligno uite. & per portas intrent in ciuitatem. Foris canes & uenefici & impudici & homicide & idolis seruientes. & omnis qui amat & facit mendacium. Ego Iesus misi angelum meum testificari uobis hec in ecclesiis. Ego sum radix & genus dauid. stella splendida & matutina. Et spiritus & sponsa dicunt. Veni. & qui audit dicat. Veni. & qui sitit ueniat. & qui uult accipiat aquam uite gratis. Ego enim testificor omni audienti uerba prophetie libri huius. Si quis apposuerit ad hec. apponet deus super illum plagas scriptas in libro isto. Et si quis diminuerit de uerbis libri prophetie huius. auferet deus partem eius de libro uite & de ciuitate sancta & de his que scripta sunt in libro isto. Dicit qui testificatur hec. Etiam uenio cito. Amen. Veni domine Iesu. Gratia domini nostri Iesu christi cum omnibus uobis. Amen.

The River of Living Water

> And he [the angel] showed me a river of living water, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face (Rev 22:1-4).[276]

In his miniature [9], the artist of the Lambeth Apocalypse[277] tells the vision of the New Jerusalem, in which the river of living water sustains and nourishes the new city, flanked by the tree of life (cf. Ezek 47:5-12). This tree, inaccessible for human beings, guarded by the Cherubim since their expulsion from Paradise, is now providing fruits every month. Its leaves are healing the nations (cf. Gen 3:22-24; also Ezek 47:12). The power of the human creature to unmake humanity after being part of the good creation, the lost Paradise, becomes a new creation here. The broken relation, which is as well the broken relation among human beings, among the nations, is healed. This is the new city. This is the kingdom of God and the Lamb. John envisions this new community of servants of God from a mountain, a mountain, based on earthly ground, yet firmly joined with the heavens through the river of living water, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. The Lamb, the Lord of lords and King of kings

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[276] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.

[277] [9] Lambeth Palace Library. *The Lambeth Apocalypse,* Ms. 209. fol. 38v. (Library photo, with permission).

is the source for new life, for this new creation. Death is no more (Rev 21:23). The Lamb enlightens the community (Rev 21:23), the city of God, where "light shall be no more: and they [servants] shall not need the light of the lamp, nor of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them" (Rev 21:5).[278] In the Lamb, the Son of God, the future can be seen as possibility for humanity, in which humanity is transformed into Civitas Dei, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven (Rev 21:10).

From the moment of creation to its conclusion, the history of humanity with God appears in the miniature sharpened as essential moments. In the artistic representation as in our textual image, history is condensed in these moments, which are constitutive for humanity as being. Yet the decisiveness in which it is perceived in the artistic representation or mythological story is rarely experienced in human reality.

4.3. The Question of Life and Death

Metaphorical language in the Apocalypse leads readers/audience to "cross-sections" between myth and historicity. These sharpen the awareness for constitutive moments in human existence. The most striking "limit experience"

[278] Trans. *The Douay-Rheims Version* ed. 1899.

in human existence, the experience of life and death, becomes visible in space and time as fragmentary appearance open towards imaginative thought, expectant emotions and mental feelings.[279]

Power over Life and Death

The harlot and the bride as expression for the human consciousness of sin have been discussed in the previous chapter. However, another important dimension evoked by the female image is her power over life and death. The imagery of the bride and her antithesis, the harlot, resonate with an image that can be found in many ancient cultures, the mythological image of the divine mother.[280] The distinctive ability of women to bear children, to produce descendants and ensure future generations, is worshipped as a divine quality. In relation to the fruit bearing quality of the soil, this capacity is frequently related to the life coming forth from the earth and venerated as mother earth. Mircea Eliade considers the earth mother as one of the major recurring mythological patterns in comparative religion:

> In all mythological and ritual patterns we have examined, the earth is primarily honored for its endless capacity to bear fruit. That is why, with time, the Earth-Mother imperceptibly turned into the Corn Mother. But the theophany of the soil never totally disappeared from the picture of "Mothers," or earth divinities....In every kind of phenomenon to which the epiphany of the soil has given rise-whether a "sacred presence", a still formless divinity, a clearly-defined divine figure, or merely a "custom"

[279] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight 70-75.
[280] For a "biography" of traditional figures and symbolic characteristics of the mother-goddess "in diverse cultural forms" see: D. Leeming, J. Page,

> that results from some confused memory of subterranean powers-everywhere we can discern the activity of motherhood, of an inexhaustible power of creation.[281]

The phenomenon of fertility in its various possible expressions in life is thus connected in mythology and ritual, symbolizing the fruitfulness of the land in relation to the fertility of women. The power over life and death inherent in the cycle of life, characteristic for mother earth, is thus venerated as creative power itself. Moreover, as the cycle of life in nature suggests, the realities of life and death are intrinsically associated with this image of the great mother. A famous hymn to mother earth was attributed to Homer, in which she is praised as "mother of all" and "holy goddess."

> I will sing of well-founded Earth, mother of all, eldest of all beings. She feeds all creatures that are in the world, all that go upon the goodly land, and all that are in the paths of the seas, and all that fly: all these are fed of her store. Through you, O queen, men are blessed in their children and blessed in their harvests, and to you it belongs to give means of life to mortal men and to take it away. Happy is the man whom you delight to honor! He has all things abundantly: his fruitful land is laden with corn, his pastures are covered with cattle, and his house is filled with good things. Such men rule orderly in their cities of fair women: great riches and wealth follow them: their sons exult with ever-fresh delight, and their daughters in flower-laden bands play and skip merrily over the soft flowers of the field. Thus is it with those whom you honor O holy goddess, bountiful spirit. Hail, Mother of the gods, wife of starry Heaven; freely bestow upon me

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Goddess: Myth of the Female Divine (New York: Oxford: Oxford University 1994) esp. 3.

[281] M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion.* 261.

> for this my song substance that cheers the heart! And now I will remember you and another song also.[282]

The Homeric Hymn provides an interesting example of the female symbolism of the divine mother earth, the provider of life. Distinctive motifs, describing the divine mother earth in other cultural contexts, also appear as characteristics associated with the bride and the harlot in the book of Revelation. As the mother earth feeds all creatures with her goodly land and provides fruitful earth, laden with corn, so is the bride as heavenly city portrayed through images of fruit-bearing land (eg. Rev 22:2). Evoked is the garden Eden, where food and water is provided abundantly.

> God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. (Gen 1:29)

Through mother earth, the people are blessed in their children according to the Homeric Hymn. The image of the city as bride of the Lamb also epitomizes the life-giving power associated with the moment of marriage, the potential for future generations. This creates an expectancy of a new horizon, hope for future fulfilment. There is, of course, a very important difference between the goddess mother-earth and the bride in the book of Revelation: the woman is part of God's creation. She is not divine. The power to give life or take life is God's power, not

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[282] *Homeric Hymns 30.* Anonymous. The Homeric Hymns and Homerica. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914) Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

the power of mother earth. In the language of the Apocalypse, life comes forth from the marriage between the Lamb and the bride, the Son of God.

In this context, the harlot raises the angst of no future. Famine is imminent for the harlot/Babylon (Rev 18:8). The city cannot provide food for her inhabitants, cannot provide the necessary life-giving sources. The abundance of precious articles which the earth brings forth, including cinnamon, spices, fragrant oil, frankincense, wine, oil, flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, human souls, are all lost completely with the destruction of Babylon (Rev 18:12-14).[283] Death is the harlot's mark (Rev 17:6).

As "mother of harlots and earth's abominations" (Rev 17:5), Babylon lacks the essential quality of a woman to bring forth life. Her relations are not fruitful and cannot produce life but bring about the blood of holy people and prophets and all those slaughtered on earth (Rev 17:6, 18:24). The name "mother" (Rev 17:5) in this context is highly ironic! Wine, generally associated with times of joy (cf. Isa 22:13), intoxicates the nations with the woman's "passionate immoral longing" (Rev 18:3), relations that do not allow for future generations. Therefore, most appropriately, the judgment of the harlot is

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[283] Note e.g. Anat's role in Ugaritic texts, which also links the topics of warfare and death with fertility. The production of an heir, from the relation between Baal and the goddess Anat, is associated with the fertility of the land. This relation, however, is impeded through Baal's repeated battle and defeat, which causes the rains to cease and the fields to become unproductive while the final victory and recapture of Baal's throne causes the fields to become fertile.

> And say to the Virgin 'Anatu, repeat to the Wanton Widow of the Nations: 'A message from Ba'lu the Almighty, a word from the Mightiest of heroes: Oppose war on earth, put love-fruit in the ground, pour peace in the middle of the earth, tranquillity in the middle of the fields.

Baal I.iii in: J. C. De Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden/New York/Kopenhagen/Köln: E. J. Brill 1987) 9. K. G. Jung, "Baal"

presented in form of a dirge (Rev 18:9-19) since the harlot brings about death not life. For this reason the happy sound of the wedding ceremony, the bride and the bridegroom will not be heard any more, and there is no need for skilful crafts (Rev 18:22-23). The millstone is not used any longer to grind grain for bread but to execute the final judgment, Babylon's final destruction (Rev 18:21).[284]

In the harlot's conduct, the history that begins with creation, the history that is continued in God's covenant and God's promise for blessings of life and posterity (Gen 17:1ff), comes to an absolute end (also Rev 18:21). The symbolism of her infertility as consequence of her infinite passionate longing opens the possibility of ultimate destruction and death (Rev 14:8, 18:8, 21), which is also the death of her followers (Rev 2:22-23, 3:1, 21:8). Death, brought about in Babylon's destruction, is vividly pictured as darkness, which cannot be illuminated by the light any longer revoking the light that conquered the darkness in the beginning (Rev 18:23 cf. Gen 1:3-4). With the extinction of light, the central symbol of the beginning (Gen 1:3) vanishes. Lost is the hope for life. In the Apocalypse, the harlot foreshadows the possibility of death as irreversible reality of ultimate darkness, the second death (Rev 21:8 et al.). In this sense, the harlot "guides" the reader/audience to become able to see the abyss of absolute Nothingness.

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in: G. W. Bromiley ed. et.al. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* vol. 1 (377-79).

[284] In Biblical texts, a millstone was used as deadly weapon against Abimelech (Judg 9:53; 2 Sam 11:21 cf. Matt 18:6 parr.).

Emotion of Longing

As argued earlier,[285] the woman's impurities and sexual immorality can refer to any human being who uses freedom to surpass finiteness and enters into the contest for kingship over the cosmos. Sinfulness in the figure of the harlot is not a simple habit displeasing to God; it refers to the utmost possible opposition to God, which is the infinite desire to be like God. This is sinfulness per se as part of the essential combat between the kingdom of the beast and the kingdom of God. Death is ultimately the consequence of Babylon's opposition to God, of her attempt to gain divine authority through powerful relations (comp. Rev 17:3). In this sense, Babylon is irrevocably breaking the relation between human beings and God. Her sinfulness, which is the sinfulness of her inhabitants, is the ultimate cause of her own destruction. Death, in this sense, is the self-inflicted condition for the human being who has irrevocably renounced the relation with God. Babylon's sinfulness is a possible conclusion to humanity's attempt to become like God, knowing good and evil, which, in the terms of myth, caused the expulsion from Paradise. As completion of this first rupture, Babylon's judgment is her death (Rev 18:10). Here, realizing the spectacle of Babylon's ruin, the readers/audience face the abyss of total loss forever. Here, fear and anxiety causes longing for fulfilment, an unsatisfied urge seeking future possibility beyond available reality, the heavenly city. This authentic emotion is hope,

> this expectant counter emotion against anxiety and fear *is therefore the most human of all mental feelings and only accessible to men, and it also refers to the furthest and brightest*

[285] See 4.2.

> *horizon.* It suits that appetite in the mind which the subject not only has, but of which, as unfulfilled subject, it still essentially consists.[286]

Unsatisfied hunger consciously realized as reality made visible in our textual image thus provokes the search for new horizons of possibility, which is as also the search for existential fulfilment.

Hope wears the mask of lively faces in the Apocalypse. The universal life giving power of God, extending from the beginning of creation to its fulfilment is "breaking" into humanity's condition of sinfulness. The "pardon" despite the failure of humanity in the relation with God is the Lamb of God. "Breaking" into the history of failure is the coming of the "Son of God" (Rev 2:18), who is "the First and the Ultimate," who was dead and came back to life" (Rev 2:8). The Lamb is the ultimate pardon for humanity that might otherwise be lost forever. The broken covenantal relation between God and the human being, which began with the initial opposition to God (Gen 3:1-24), is renewed through the Son of God. The Lamb that has been slaughtered thus offers a new relation, which transgresses death and opens a new future, in which God becomes human. The marriage between the Lamb and the bride refers to the ultimate promise that the gift of life in creation is not ending in humanity's failure but turned towards a new future, towards a new creation, the heavenly Jerusalem. The Lamb is God's ultimate promise that the combat will not be lost but will be victorious over the beast and its allies and thus will be the beginning of the new kingdom, the city of God. The Lamb is God's personal involvement in a relation that has been broken off too many times.

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[286] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight 75.

It is the ultimate pardon for a humanity torn apart between the desire to become like God and the Holiness of God. The Lamb as God's personal involvement in history is the promise that those who suffer, who are poor, who endure for the kingdom of God will earn the crown of life and not suffer death (Rev 21:4). Thus, the Son of God is truly king and judge. Therefore, the artist of the Lambeth Apocalypse [9] portrays his power as royalty; he is ruler over the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem because he is the king. He is the revelation of the quintessential meaning of humanity, humanity that is rooted in God's passionate involvement in the covenant relation with humanity, hope embodied in the Son of God, the Lamb. However, in this world, the future is not decided. The not yet as essential life experience leaves the readers/audience with expectant emotions, fear and hope, with unsatisfied hunger for a new reality, the heavenly city.

The New Creation

Encouraged by imagined beauty of the heavenly city, always fragmentary appearance provokes hunger for possible reality. Appearance, as partial-reality depiction opens space for imaginative thought and appropriation, mobilizing the senses and the urge to venture out into new horizons of possibility. Water becomes the new "spring of water of life" (Rev 21:6) and the new "stream of water of life" (Rev 22:1 ref. Gen 2:10). The images of fertility and life from the creation myth turn into the possibility signifying the end time community between God and the human being. The promise of life given to human beings who formerly have been accused of their relation with the harlot Babylon (Rev 18:3, 23 cf. 21:24-26) unlocks a new creation, a new world. This

cosmological perspective, the renewed relation between God and the human being vividly pictured in the textual image, extends beyond the boundaries of space and time. The fragment of the future city, in which God's creative act is renewed becomes an essential characteristic for the heavenly city, an intimation of, but not yet arrival at the moment of fulfilment. The tree that offered the fruit of temptation (Gen 3:1), the tree of life and healing for the nations (Rev 22:2 ref. Gen 2:9) is a vision. Water, the initial symbol of chaos (Gen 1:2), loses is threatening force forever. It is water of life, a metaphor providing hope for the ultimate pardon, that is life not death. Hope extends to a place where the beast of the sea no longer rises (Rev 13:1), where wealth reigns no longer (Rev 18:19) and where the judgment of the harlot turns into the bride of the Lamb (Rev 19:7-8). As the artist in the Lambeth Apocalypse [9] knows, this vision, this hope is already the beginning of the new city on earth. As the heavenly city coming down from heaven (Rev 21:2), the city is already part of this world envisioned by John as city that has not been fulfilled yet!

"Essential history" comes to life in the metaphor with death and life encompassing the context from creation towards fulfilment. Yet fragmentary appearance in our metaphor ultimately calls the reader/audience into responsibility to appropriate mental images to life itself. The metaphor of the city raises expectant emotions, fear, anxiety, hope, belief leaving the decision between Babylon and the city of God in the hands of the reader/audience. This of course, in a Christian context, is the choice between true life and death.

4.4. Summary and Conclusion

The focus in this chapter was on metaphorical language as source for textual visualization and appropriation, an important step in the dynamic process of understanding. Guiding us in this task were the "motif elements" of *kingdom*, the *woman* and *life/death*, referring towards essential perspectives of our metaphorical network, perspectives, which are part of its evocative power. Metaphorical language, carrying the potential to stimulate textual appropriation via mental images, can heighten awareness for life existence, in which textual visualization opens imaginative space to see beyond the boundaries of space and time.

In the Apocalypse, the motif of the kingdom provides a cosmic drama with the symbolic figures of the king/queen re-enacting forces behind historical reality. A vital participant in this combat drama between God, Christ and the forces of evil is Babylon riding the beast (Rev 17:14-17). Evil history becomes visible as cosmic evil. Babylon's claim for power and royal authority offends the only one who is truly king, God, whose kingship emerges through the critical energizing power of discontinuity and breaks in with the suffering human being, the Son of God, the Lamb. All this sharpens awareness of the significance of this cosmic drama here and now. Appropriation of this spectacular battle to life experience allows us to perceive the discordance in human life between a good creation and historical existence. The readers/audience themselves become actors in the drama.

Female characters in the Apocalypse are the focal point in our second "motif thread," effectively stimulating a 'feeling mind' to imagine existential concepts. Babylon as defiled woman, as harlot nurturing an "infinite" desire to surpass her own being evokes the memory of "Eve" (Gen 3:1-24). Transgression of the relation with God constitutes her connection with the beast. Sinfulness is given a human face, a face that can be hated and loved. Yet hope, this hunger for fulfilment, for a new reality also receives a human face in the bride. In the dynamic reader/audience response, the city Babylon and the city of God do not remain abstract images but evoke sinfulness and hope as existential dimensions for humanity. Metaphorical language provides a historical referent focusing on the "cross-sections" between historicity and transcendental truth. Imaginative 'mental sensitivity' transforms words into an existential metaphor.

Another fundamental dimension comes to life with the metaphor of the woman: power over life and death. As harlot, the woman's relations are not fertile. A human face is key participant in the violation of the covenantal bond with God. In this face, humanity can be seen standing at the abyss of total destruction. Here, the ruins of Babylon most urgently incite the longing to imagine a different reality, to venture out for the heavenly city, the marriage between the bride and the Lamb. This is hope, nourished through a beautiful vision Rev 21:1-22:5, providing the fragmentary appearance of a possible new reality as a spur to imagine the city of God.

5. City Images: Plato and the Apocalypse

So far, the focus of this analysis has been on what we have called a textual image of the city in the Apocalypse, which brings to mind imaginative thought and visualized textuality. Imaginative appropriation means finding significance in life experience that is making sense of the world in an act of reader/audience response to the text. Evoked by our metaphor in the Apocalypse and brought into existence by creative imagination are mental images of the city. Questions about the possibly best/ideal city/community, have of course been the centre of discussion throughout the centuries, leading to genuinely different approaches.

Myth

In antiquity, there was much reflection on the ideal city/state.[287] As should have become evident from our exegesis of the textual image of the city in the Apocalypse,[288] mythological stories perform an important role passing on, exhibiting, and influencing values and beliefs and ideas in almost all cultures. As narratives, which carry on ancient memories and reflections about humanity, and the divine, these also transmit various concepts of ideal community life cross-culturally. In the Greco-Roman world, mythological

[287] Although some scholars, like D. Georgi, have referred to the similar character of the vision of the city of God and Hellenistic philosophical ideas about the ideal city/state, to my knowledge, there has not so far been any extended discussion on the subject. D. Georgi, "Die Visionen vom himmlischen Jerusalem in Apk 21 und 22" 356-57.
[288] Chapter 4.

legends like the golden age and the Elysian Fields[289] depict symbolic images envisioning an ideal world. Greek dramatic representations offer ample evidence of reflections on historic and social life, exploring and challenging its fundamental values. On stage, these performances most often served as exciting portrayals embodying social, religious and cultural values and beliefs. Jean-Pierre Vernant directs attention to this function of Greek tragedy, which he explores as a clash between the mythical past and new ideas about social and ethical questions:

> The drama brings to the stage an ancient heroic legend. For the city this legendary world constitutes the past, -a past sufficiently distant for the contrasts between the mythical traditions that it embodies and the new forms of legal and political thought to be clearly visible; yet a past still close enough for the clash of values still to be painful one and for this clash still to be currently taking place.[290]

A yet different kind of reflection about an ideal society evolved in ancient Greek philosophical thought. Philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are important representatives of this genre, in which ideas about possibilities of community/city/state are considered in philosophical discourse.

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[289] E.g. The reign of Cronus: Hes. *Wd.* 109-166; Hom. *Od.* 4.561-69; or Aeneas's visit in the underworld: Verg. *A.* VI, 637 ff.

[290] Jean-Pierre Vernant "The Historical moment of tragedy in Greece: some of the social and psychological conditions" in: Jean-Pierre Vernant, Pierre Vidal-Naquet Trans. J. Loyd *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece* (New Jersey: Humanities Press 1981) 9.

Comparison/Contrast

The following chapter is designed to sharpen and deepen our understanding of the metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation by comparing and contrasting it with the philosophical examination of the ideal city conducted by Plato in the *Republic*. Locating our metaphor contextually with other texts dealing with the idea of the city in Greek antiquity, allows us to explore "similarities" and "differences" in a context of "sameness" and "difference" in a "textual conversation."[291] This conversation is an attempt to bring different, yet similar, models of the city/state into dialogue, to conceive essential characteristics of possible concepts as a way of understanding the city in the book of Revelation. Plato's concept of the city/state (πόλις)[292] presents an argumentative discourse, a reasoned analysis of ethical, psychological and social dimensions, articulating values and beliefs among classic societies. The Greek philosopher has been in the centre of discussion for centuries and this chapter will not put forward a particularly new interpretation of his works. Instead, it is meant to illuminate important aspects of the metaphorical vision of the heavenly city in the book of Revelation in relation to the philosophical models of society provided in Plato's work.

Plato, as a representative of a ruling class in Athens, does not reflect ideas of the Greco-Roman world at large. Yet in his endeavour to propose 'meta-normative' inquiry and explication, provides an arresting account of an ideal city/state communicated as philosophical discourse. Plato and his famous

[291] W. Doniger, "The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth" 9.
[292] Since the typical political community in classical Greek included an independent city with surrounding territory, in this context, πόλις is translated as city/state.

student, Aristotle, provide reasoned arguments that convey ideas about an ideal organization of society based on premises embedded in human nature and human life, premises which Greeks generally would have agreed upon.

> In the attempt, both Plato and Aristotle worked and wrote on a level of philosophical abstraction, sophistication and generalization that was ... beyond the reach of their fellow –men...not all Athenians held the same views and not all Greeks were Athenians, but the evidence is decisive that nearly all of them would have accepted as premises, one might say axioms, that the good life was possible only in a *polis*, that the good man was more or less synonymous with the good citizen.[293]

The level of philosophical abstraction articulated as reasoned arguments about the possible best/ideal city/state is essential to this conversation with our textual image of the city in the Apocalypse. As concepts that strive to convey an ideal city, the conversation in the context of differences and similarities should provide insights into specific characteristics concerning two literary models of the city in antiquity embedded in metaphysical premises.

Philosophy versus Myth

Greek philosophical argumentation presents a mode of language rather different from myth and the narrative metaphor conveying the image of the city in the book of Revelation. Yet comparing and contrasting the two different bodies of text will heighten our awareness of important topics and questions which are explicitly argued in Greek philosophical debates, yet touched upon in

[293] M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University 1984) 124-25.

a less definite mode throughout the book of Revelation, and, as we will argue, often in a more powerful persuasive manner in the latter. Plato, as one of the earliest and most influential critics of myth, provides significant arguments regarding the potentially dangerous persuasive power of myth. A dialogue between the two modes of language will allow us to explore the efficacy of reasoned argumentation in philosophical discourse in contrast to the effectiveness of heavily visualized language to convey ideas and concepts of fundamental significance.

5.1. Plato's Ideal City/State

Aristotle in his *Politics* defines the human being as ζῷον πολιτικόν,[294] as being whose ultimate goal is by nature to live in a city/state, thus seeking the highest good of any individual, the good life.[295] He certainly draws on a long tradition, which historically attributes religious, political and economical significance to the city/state, a significance which played a role in the development of major cities as the principal focus of civilized life and social relations.[296]

[294] Aristot. *Pol.* 1253a.
[295] Ibid. 1252b.
[296] For a comprehensive survey on the emergence of the city in the Middle and Near East and the Mediterranean region from its first development in Sumer see:

Although originating from traditional Greek understanding of the city, the questions, eloquently considered in Plato's works, address a new horizon of inquiries. The human being, whose character is defined in analogy to the character of the city/state,[297] becomes the explicit centre in the search for metaphysical reasoning about the best kind of city/state. To achieve this goal, Plato outlines paradigms for an ideal city/community based on the best/ideal human character.[298] In this context, the virtues provide a complex means for bringing about a harmonious city/community, not as individual discernment but as shared aim for realization of the human good in general. The virtuous human being essentially creates the best/ideal city. To achieve this goal of a harmonious city/community, broad conformity regarding goods and virtues among community members is needed. Identity of the ideal city/state rests essentially on the virtues of the citizens/community members. In contrast to the imagined world evoked by our image of the city in the Apocalypse, which foremost strikingly conveys essential dimensions as metaphorical human body/bodies, abstract concepts, namely virtues/vices, play a major role depicting significant aspects of community in Greek philosophical texts.

M. Hammond, *The City in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University 1972) 13-154.

[297] E.g. Plat. *Rep.* 571-580; Aristot. *Pol.* 1324a. An excellent discussion on Aristotle's ethical account as defined and located by the characteristics of the city is offered A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue, A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame 1981) 137-53.

[298] Regarding the political concept of a harmonious city/state in Greek thought, see G. M. Freeman *The Heavenly Kingdom: Aspects of Political Thought in the Talmud and Midrash* 11-18.

Plato's Luxurious City

Philosophical discourse offers paradigmatic designs for the best city/state. Plato proposes that the guidance for the city/state can only come from the highest human quality, which means the one who has the best theoretical understanding, the lover of wisdom or philosopher (φιλόσοφοι):

> it is impossible for anyone except the lover of wisdom to have savored the delight that the contemplation of true being and reality brings.... he is the only one whose experience will have been accompanied by intelligence... that which is the instrument, or organon, of judgment is the instrument, not of the lover of gain or of the lover of honor, but of the lover of wisdom...things approved by the lover of wisdom are most valid and true.[299]

The philosophers are the ones who savour "the delight that the contemplation of true being and reality brings."[300] They are naturally apt to rule following the idea of the good, which is the constituting principle for the well being of the state/city. Contrary to other statesmen, who seek the pleasures of sense and ambition, who supremely rule over human beings, the philosopher king[301] is not aiming for wealth, power and amusement but contemplates the idea of the good.

The quest for justice[302] is at the centre of the philosophical idea about the ideal/best city, a quest that is impeded through injustice performed by human beings. Justice (δικαιοσύνη) requires a different understanding from any modern perception of justice. According to Plato, justice is the virtue of attributing the

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[299] Plat. *Rep.* 582c-e. Trans. P. Shorey. LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1969) Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000. See also Aristot. *Pol.* 1323b.
[300] Ibid. 582c.
[301] Ibid. 473d
[302] Ibid. 612 b.

right function to each part of the soul. It is therefore an ontological quality. In the Republic, the example of the city that lacks health serves as an important guide on how to discern the origin of justice or injustice in the city/state.[303] Socrates describes the city not ruled by the philosopher as the fevered (φλεγμαίνουσαν πόλιν), luxurious city (τρυφῶσαν πόλιν),[304] a city/state characterized by luxury and war:

> It is not merely the origin of a city, it seems, that we are considering but the origin of a luxurious city. Perhaps that isn't such a bad suggestion, either. For by observation of such a city it may be we could discern the origin of justice and injustice in states. The true state I believe to be the one we have described--the healthy state, as it were. But if it is your pleasure that we contemplate also a fevered state, there is nothing to hinder. For there are some, it appears, who will not be contented with this sort of fare or with this way of life; but couches will have to be added thereto and tables and other furniture, yes, and relishes and myrrh and incense and girls and cakes--all sorts of all of them. And the requirements we first mentioned, houses and garments and shoes, will no longer be confined to necessities, but we must set painting to work and embroidery, and procure gold and ivory and similar adornments, must we not?[305]

The luxurious city is the fevered city. This city is suffering maladies because her commodities are no longer used conforming to the measure prescribed by necessity. Accordingly, the people's desires are no longer ruled by virtue but enslaved to their appetite, which is the cause for injustice among the people in the city/state. The citizens of the luxurious city are people who have abandoned

[303] Ibid. 372e-373e.
[304] Ibid. 373e.
[305] Ibid. 373a-b.

the limit of necessity in favour of power, wealth and acquisition of their neighbours' land. They have surrendered desire that is limited to necessities in order to gain unlimited wealth and luxury, which inevitably causes rivalry with their neighbours and brings about war.

> And the territory, I presume, that was then sufficient to feed the then population, from being adequate will become too small. Is that so or not?" "It is." "Then we shall have to cut out a cantle of our neighbor's land if we are to have enough for pasture and ploughing, and they in turn of ours if they too abandon themselves to the unlimited acquisition of wealth, disregarding the limit set by our necessary wants." "Inevitably, Socrates." "We shall go to war as the next step, Glaucon--or what will happen?" "What you say," he said. "And we are not yet to speak," said I, "of any evil or good effect of war, but only to affirm that we have further discovered the origin of war, namely, from those things from which the greatest disasters, public and private, come to states when they come." "Certainly." [306]

Plato considers the excessive appetite for wealth, luxury and power as the prominent vice responsible for rivalry and war among human beings.

The luxurious city presents the antithesis to the ideal city, in which virtue and happiness depend on the right estimate of pleasures. As a negative example, the luxurious, fevered city as community of "fevered" citizens offers considerable insights into the contrasting virtues and therefore human characters necessary to create the ideal city. Human character is defined as an essential part of the life of the city.[307] Community therefore is to achieve a shared goal in community life,

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[306] Ibid. 373d-e.

[307] Group oriented personality, as a distinctive characteristic for Mediterranean societies in contrast to post-modern individualism, has been the focus of several recent studies, drawing attention to the interrelation of norms and identity in

failing to achieve this goal means destroying community. Vices as excessive appetite are therefore not merely offences against given norms or the law; they are human failure obstructing the provision of order to the city/state. Vices violate the pursuit of the common good. In other words, the city/state contributes vitally to the social identity of the individual person in community:[308]

> To fail community by committing an offense against the law is not simply to fail by not being good enough. It is to fail in quite a different way... an offense against the laws destroys those relationships which make common pursuit of the good possible; defective character, while it may render someone more liable to commit offense, makes one unable to contribute to the achievement of that good without which the community's common life has no point. [309]

Plato's rejection of the luxurious city/state in his Republic appears to strike a similar tone to the judgment of Babylon's luxury (Rev 18:2-3)!

Wealth and Luxury in the Apocalypse

The analogy between the city/state and the human being is also an important aspect of the textual image of the city in the Apocalypse. The mythic language merges human character/identity and community/city in metaphors of two antithetical cities in the Apocalypse:

> The woman is the city, who holds royal dominion over the kings of the earth...The New Jerusalem is prepared as a bride made beautiful for her husband (Rev 17: 18; 21:2).

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antiquity. See for example: MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; P. Esler, *Galatians* esp. 45-49; B. Malina, *New Testament World* 63-86.

[308] P. Esler, *Galatians* 45.

[309] MacIntyre, *AfterVirtue* 152.

In Plato and the Apocalypse human well-being are linked to a particular type of polis. The metaphor of the city as woman in the Apocalypse provokes the visualization of community, whose identity is the identity of its members. A major concern for the textual image of the city in the text is therefore the right identity, which finds its expression in the right conduct, best suited for the city/community. In a manner similar to the virtues and vices explicated in philosophical reasoning, the imaginative visualization of the metaphor of the city signifies and pictures ethic-moral dimensions of the two cities as identities, Babylon and Jerusalem. Vices that are responsible for the destruction of the city/community and virtues required to participate in building the heavenly city are revealed through the antithetical textual images of Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem.

However, instead of philosophical concepts, the metaphor of the city as woman provides a powerful evocative image conveying virtues/vices through the visualized human body. Vices are clothed in the beauty of a woman, Babylon, who entices the kings on earth (Rev 18:9). As beautiful royal woman, "clothed in purple, and scarlet, and covered with gold, jewellery, and priceless stone, and pearls," she lures them into the abuse of power to make war against the Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev 17:4; 12-14). Babylon, the attractive female provides the merchants with riches, wealth, and delicacies (Rev 18:3). Merchants and seafarers, who gained wealth from her luxurious living, weep and grieve over the loss of Babylon, when the time for her judgment has come. They lament since nobody buys their cargo anymore, the precious goods, meant to entice the appetite of Babylon's inhabitants. The list of luxurious merchandise

in the book of Revelation includes most precious goods known to human beings on earth:

> cargo of gold, and silver, and jewels, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet garment, and every kind of scented wood, and every kind of ivory vessels, and every kind of priceless wooden vessels, and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and fragrant oil, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour and wheat, and cattle, and sheep, and horses, and chariots and bodies, namely human souls. (Rev 18: 12-3)

The list includes human beings, as part of the merchandise used in order to gain wealth. The avarice of the merchants, which exploits the unsatisfied appetite of human beings, becomes the image for vices that are at the core of any city's destruction. In the Apocalypse, the lament of the merchants over the loss of their precious goods evokes a dramatic image bringing vividly to mind human exploitation, which violates the possibility of bringing about an ideal community/city.

Condemnation of Luxury

The judgment over Babylon, the final destruction of the beautiful city, strikes a similar note as the rejection of the luxurious city in Plato's *Republic.* Both texts identify the unrestrained use of goods as the origin of the city that falls far behind the ideal or best possible city/community. In a society, where goods necessarily were limited, the strong condemnation of luxury is very

persuasive.[310] Community must fail if human beings abuse wealth and power to the advantage of the few over the many, if the goods are not distributed according to necessity and are not accessible to all the people. The city corrupted by luxury therefore provides a vital antithesis to the healthy/heavenly city, exemplifying human characteristics that lead to the destruction of community.

At the same time, the topic of evil luxury carries strong overtones of an eloquent slogan. The condemnation of luxury is a well-known axiom in antiquity, including stereotyping of certain groups like the kings, merchants and seafarers in the Apocalypse.[311] The Greek city/state certainly did not provide means according to necessity for all citizens and Plato's ideal/best city designed as elite state is no exception.[312] Plato's argument that limitless desire for luxury is the origin for concupiscence and ultimately the cause for discord and war became influential for the Church fathers, once again being not rarely exploited as rhetorical weapon. A poignant example is Tertullian's condemnation of ostentatious adornments for women, in which luxurious goods are traced back to the fallen angels (Gen 6:1-6), who had taught the arts of luxury. In Tertullian's

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[310] Regarding the perception of limited good in the pre-industrial city see: B. Malina, *The New Testament World* 103-7.

[311] So for example M. T. Cicero who uses it as common place argument in his defence of Sextus Roscius:

> In a city, luxury is engendered; avarice is inevitably produced by luxury; audacity must spring from avarice, and out of audacity arises every wickedness and every crime.

Cic. *Rosc. Am. 27.75.* Trans. C. D. Yonge. (London. George Bell & Sons 1903) Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, February, 2000. For further references regarding the critical attitude of Roman writers towards the extravagance of first century Roman excess, see R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* 366-68.

[312] Plato's ideal state still does not include the majority of people as slaves, children, non-citizens are excluded.

argument, the arts of luxury are at the origin of the wages of sin.[313] The condemnation of luxury is of course at the heart of the medieval movement of St. Francis. Moreover, the use and abuse of power and wealth is still a vital question that needs to be answered for community in today's world. City/community is only successful if power, including economical means, is used wisely. Yet what exactly "wisely" means is the question. As provocation to consciously realize and evaluate city and community, the metaphor of the city as woman in the Apocalypse places the human being in the centre of imaginative thought. Visualized textuality in the image of the woman does not provide philosophical education, or parenesis for just action, or laws regulating the distribution of wealth, but an incentive to imagine possibilities of humanizing humanity. Power and access to goods and wealth of course play an important role in this process; however, the lively significance is not the control over these goods but community as fulfilment of personal relation. The metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse opens imaginative space for the reader/audience to explore possibilities in which power and wealth serve the human being.

Paradigmatic Models

Plato develops a comprehensive and revolutionary paradigmatic concept for the city/state as anti-thesis to the luxurious city and the problems related to human vices. The best city/state is profoundly based on knowledge. The philosophers' essential instrument for realization of this ideal state is education. The ideal city/state thus provides instructional means to guide the people in the

[313] Tertullian, *The Apparel of Women* I, 1-3.

city/state. To achieve the greatest possible unity, Plato, proposes that traditional lines of family should be abolished. All guardians, male and female persons, receive the same education,[314] perform the same duties[315] and share goods equally. Property, houses, food and possessions are in common use.[316] Plato's concept is a radical attempt to avoid problems emerging with social and economical differences among the citizens, to create an ideal community.

In the *Republic,* Plato explicitly includes women as "female rulers" (τὰς αρχούσας) and attributes "duties of civic guardianship" to them. This should guarantee a pure mind open to education to attain the highest human quality. Yet how far reaching this unity for the state is does not become clear in the *Republic.* In the *Laws,* on the other hand, the goal is total unity:

> That State and polity come first, and those laws are best, where throughout the whole State the old saying that "friends have all things really in common." As to this condition,--whether it anywhere exists now, or ever will exist,--in which there is observed as carefully as possible a community of wives, children, and all chattels, and all that is called "private" is everywhere and by every means rooted out of our life, and so far as possible it is contrived that even things naturally "private" have become in a way "communized,"--eyes, for instance, and ears and hands seem to see, hear, and act in common,--[317]

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[314] Plat. *Rep.* 456.
[315] Ibid. 540c; 457a.
[316] Ibid. 417.
[317] Plat. *Laws* 739b-c. Trans. R.G. Bury. LCL (Cambridge: University Press 1968). Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000. In the *Republic,* only the guardians are meant to be citizens Plat. *Rep.* 417.

Plato's inclusion of women among the guardians has especially caught the attention of scholars today. His model suggests unfamiliar ideas in a world where women generally did not actively participate in public life. It explores possibility in the realm of practicality for a remarkable concept at least in the context of the ancient city/state. It is true Plato's ideal city is still far removed from a modern western ideal of equality. The guardians include an aristocratic elite among the people. Despite Plato's equalizing model in his *Republic* and in the *Laws*, the Athenian philosopher also elaborates on the conviction that women are still considered naturally inferior to men in regards to virtue.[318] The inclusion of women among the guardians results from Plato's system in which the ideal rational society minimizes female inferiority.[319] As D. Dawson rightly concedes:

> Both the *Republic* and the *Laws* insist on inequalities of human talent, the functionality of strict social stratification, the need to restrict citizenship to a small cohesive group that can be freed from the degrading necessities of manual labor...Plato could not show how to put this (the high-utopian side) into practice and left it in utopia. In the end, it appears that the only practical result he could hope to achieve was something surprisingly ordinary: a revitalized aristocracy, devoted to community service; the ancient ideal of

[318] Plat. *Laws* 781a-b, 917a. Ibid.

[319] The inconsistencies of Plato's reflections on the role of women have been summarized in a quite detailed analysis of the text and a discussion about other scholarly positions in N. Harris Bluestone's study on *Women in the Ideal Society* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts 1987). She concludes:

> He [Plato] assumes that males *as a class* do everything better, an assumption which belies an undeniable unconscious prejudice against women. Nevertheless, he also assumes that this slight class superiority of men will not affect the process of finding women to make up their share of the guardian group. Given the cultural context, his assurance of complete equality in kind, no matter what its motivation, stands out as a unique declaration. 192.

> koinonia uniting rich and poor, requiring now an exacting discipline on part of the rich, but still dependent upon the willingness of the rich to submit to it.[320]

Yet the questions and arguments considered still offer vital material in discussions about the most efficient way to insure equality among the people. In his concept of an ideal city, Plato offers critique of existing structures and incentives to initiate possible restructuring of the less than ideal in the discussion of an ideal design for the city/state. Plato thus provides a model of how utopian thought might enter the world of practicality, action, and viable reality. In contrast, the female imagery in the Apocalypse certainly does not offer a precise model for the community/city. The text evokes community as possibility not yet structured, and left as a task for imaginative completion, an appropriation of the text to life as reader/audience response. The metaphor predominantly remains in the world of possibility.

It should not come as a surprise that Plato's utopian city in the *Republic* was strongly criticized in the ancient world, with Aristotle as one of the fiercest critics. Aristotle designs his ideal city/state in compliance with the structures of the extended family of the patriarchal household in antiquity. Throughout the centuries, this civic blueprint has been the classical model ensuring order in the city/state modelled according to the patriarchal structure of power and subordination. Aristotle organizes different classes according to differing status and skills in compliance with traditional hierarchical custom. For the highest class, educational skills and a certain amount of property and good birth are imperative. According to Aristotle, citizens are those who "participate in judicial

[320] D. Dawson, *Cities of the Gods,* 93.

functions and in office."[321] Hierarchical order is an essential structural principle to achieve the goal of harmony and unity for the best/ ideal city/state. Aristotle's definition explicitly excludes women, workers, slaves as well as freedmen from full citizenship. In his definition of democratic citizenship Aristotle does not even mention women yet considers children and old men "citizens in a sense, yet not quite absolutely:"

> For we seek to define a citizen in the absolute sense, and one possessing no disqualification of this nature that requires a correcting term... A citizen pure and simple is defined by nothing else so much as by the right to participate in judicial functions and in office. [322]

Plato's and Aristotle's ideal city/state are both aristocratic models, excluding the majority of people, the ones who are non-citizens[323] and slaves. Regarding Plato's and Aristotle's utopian writings D. Dawson concludes:

> They provided a new ideology to reform and revitalize traditional aristocratic values; their practical goal was the creation of a unified and disciplined upper class, generous with patronage and immune to the temptations of faction. [324]

In contrast to the textual image in the Apocalypse, the philosophers' models are attempts to surpass the problems of failure in community/city and state through

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[321] Aristot. *Pol.* 1275a. Trans. H. Rackham. Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) The Perseus Project, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
[322] Ibid. 1275a.
[323] Yet whatever conditions regulate citizenship depends on the particular constitution of the state. See Aristot. *Pol.* 1274-1275b.
[324] D. Dawson, *The Cities of the Gods* 102.

paradigmatic structures of organization and distribution of power and wealth among the citizens. Plato provides a concept for a harmonious ordered city/state, in which the majority of people succumb to the power of the educated, the keepers of knowledge, the philosophers. Today Plato's ideal city/state does not appear indisputable but certain aspects bruise modern western sensitivity. On the level of the text, metaphorical imagery in the Apocalypse lacks Plato's practical structure since the language is far less conclusive. The task of bringing envisioned concepts for the new city to life is left to the reader/audience. In contrast to Plato's structured model, evocative language in the Apocalypse serves to arouse disgust about the status quo, Babylon, and longing for a new community/city built on the ruins of the known reality. The metaphor of the city remains a constant dynamic incentive to explore the not yet possible, to venture into utopia not thought of or imagined before, utopia not offered as philosophical concept.

5.2. Platonic Myth

The tenth and last book of Plato's *Republic* closes with a complex visionary account of the after-world, dramatic visions of the journey of the souls

in after-life, the myth of Er.[325] In this myth, Plato abandons reasoned argumentative language in favour of visualized future possibility and thus comes much closer to the way reality is grasped in the Apocalypse. The narrative framework of the myth explains how a just man from Pamphylia, Er, the son of Armenius, is taken on a journey through the other world. Er is killed in a battle, but is revived after the twelfth day. He gives a detailed account of the things he has seen in the world beyond. The very complex myth includes four visions and deals with the rewards and punishments that await the human being in the other world. In the first vision, Er sees different spaces that await the righteous and the wicked after their judgment. He also listens to the stories told by the souls. Some lament and wail over their suffering during their journey beneath the earth. Others praise their delights and happiness in heaven. In the myth Er himself becomes a messenger (ἄγγελος)[326] and mediator between the two worlds revealing his extraordinary visions and auditions to all human beings. The narrative evokes an elaborate image of a world beyond the boundaries of present reality. Cognitive thought, highly esteemed in the *Republic*, is cast off and replaced with a speculative vision, a myth likely to speak to the senses and to evoke emotional response.

Destinies of the Souls

The myth is a complex combination of visionary and oral parts: "and they [the souls] charged him [Er] to give ear and to observe everything in

[325] Plat. *Rep.* 614-21. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
[326] Ibid. 614d.

place."[327] What Er experiences are two spatial parts of the other world, the underworld and the heavenly realm, which represent the destinies of the souls according to their ethical conduct in life. Plato's myth discloses the possibilities of reward or punishment,[328] revealing the judgments that await the unrighteous and the righteous in the after-world. The myth sets out different possibilities for the future of the souls. Through the myth, the human being is reminded that choices, which the soul makes during the present lifetime, are consequential for the after-life and rebirth. The favourable choice is indirectly suggested through the stories told by the souls, explicating the consequences resulting from a just or unjust life:

> And they [the souls] told their stories to one another, the one lamenting and wailing as they recalled how many and how dreadful things they had suffered and seen in their journey beneath the earth--it lasted a thousand years--while those from heaven related their delights and visions of a beauty beyond words. To tell it all, Glaucon, would take all our time, but the sum, he said, was this. For all the wrongs they had ever done to anyone and all whom they had severally wronged they had paid the penalty in turn tenfold for each, and the measure of this was by periods of a hundred years each, so that on the assumption that this was the length of human life the punishment might be ten times the crime.[329]

The myth fulfils an important parenetic function: to teach the human being to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad. The realm of heaven and underworld become evocative pictures, incentives to imagine the possible future

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[327] Ibid. 614d.
[328] Plat. *Gorg.* 527e.
[329] Plat. *Rep.* 614 e -615b. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

of any human being after death. Since the myth presumably stimulates a powerful emotional response, its persuasiveness effectively encourages the reader/audience to follow a good life on earth. This stimulus arises from a possible future, which is dependent on the judgment over the conduct of life in the current world. Hans Dieter Betz concludes regarding Plato's myth of Er:

> By its ability to create φόβος (Cf. especially Gorg. 525), those who hear the *mythos* and thus "see" the suffering of the wicked under punishment and all the other phenomena in the hereafter are confronted with that "greatest danger for men," the choice between a good and wicked life...Without experiencing such φόβος, the soul remains uneducated about itself, about life in this world and in the hereafter (See Gorg. 527E). No rational argument can motivate a person to live a good life. The *mythos*, however, has the power to persuade the soul. [330]

Visionary Journey in the Apocalypse

A quite similar response is achieved with the image of the city in the Apocalypse. While Er, becomes the messenger (ἄγγελος) to human beings, messengers from heaven (ἄγγελοι) introduce the judgment over Babylon and inspire the visions of the heavenly city (e.g. Rev 18:1; 20:1 et al.). The prophet John receives a revelation which guides Christians and the Christian community in this world. Visionary images are used to unveil the relevance of righteous

[330] Betz, draws special attention to the parenetic function of reports about an otherworldly journey as e.g. depicted in Pausania's description of the oracle of Trophonius (*Description of Greece* 9.39 et al.) and Plato's myth of Er (*Rep* 614-21). "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre in Greek and Hellenistic Literature," in: D. Hellholm ed. *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and Near East - Proceedings of the International Colloquium on*

conduct here on earth for the future judgment, a future judgment that awaits human beings.

As in the myth of Er, a decision for Babylon or the city of God is ultimately rewarded or punished. The vision of Babylon's judgment (Rev 18:1-24) serves as parenetic metaphor revealing the possibility of ultimate judgment of Babylon's citizens as a consequence of their failure in the current world. Likewise, the heavenly city provides the possible reality of ultimate reward as consequence of the right relation with God. The textual image of the city is thus a visualization of possibilities provoking human beings to be aware of the ultimate choice between a life as follower of the harlot or the bride. The visionary pictures in the Apocalypse allow for the imaginative response of readers/audience to "see" the possibility of failure (Babylon) or fulfilment of community (the heavenly city). The metaphor of the city as iconic representation of human failure or belief in God and the Lamb thus serves as distinctive identity description. It vividly discloses the best way of life in confronting the human beings with the possibilities of human community. As essential choice, the reward or punishment will be annihilation of Babylon or final community with God and the Lamb.

If the wailing of the souls in the underworld about the dreadful things they had suffered and seen in their journey beneath the earth causes fear for the readers/audience of Plato's *Republic*,[331] the visualized eradication of the city Babylon in the Apocalypse certainly must provoke great anxiety. Seeing

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Apocalypticism Uppsala, 1979 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1983) 585-88; esp. 588.

[331] Plat. *Rep.* 614.

Babylon burn at the brink of destruction causes "fear" of possible punishment. Visualized textuality enforces sympathetic imagination and yearning to avoid the wicked life of the harlot and to become the bride. The goal is to teach the readers/audience to become aware of the important choice that human beings must take on living in community and to recognize Babylon's real identity as city that brings forth death. In the myth of Er and in the metaphor of the city, the same effective techniques of persuasive visualization and emotional inspiration are utilized to enliven abstract concepts of good and evil.

Cycle of Life

The fourth vision in the myth of Er pictures the souls before the throne of Lachesis, the daughter of Necessity. Each soul has a choice about the next life in another cycle of the next generation. Here lies the important reason for the education of the human being. The goal is that the souls are able to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad and therefore take the right choice from the lives before them. Socrates explains the meaning of the myth:

> And this is the chief reason why it should be our main concern that each of us, neglecting all other studies, should seek after and study this thing -if in any way he may be able to learn of and discover the man who will give him the ability and the knowledge to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad, and always and everywhere to choose the best that the conditions allow, and, taking into account all the things of which we have spoken and estimating the effect on the goodness of his life of their conjunction or their severance,....., so that with consideration of all these things he will be able to make a reasoned choice between the better and the worse life, with his eyes fixed on the

> nature of his soul, naming the worse life that which will tend to make it more unjust and the better that which will make it more just [332]

For the human being, the ultimate goal is knowledge of the life that is good. This will enable one to "make a reasoned choice between the better and the worse life." Knowledge, in this concept, allows the deliverance from the soul's captivity, which causes discordance of self with self, or in the mythological language, the journey of unhappiness and suffering. The cycle of birth, death and rebirth offers a reasoned explanation for the different lives, fortunes and misfortunes on earth, which are principally dependent on the conduct of life on earth. But more importantly, discordance of the self with the self is pictured as a journey of unhappiness and suffering; thus an abstract concept is brought to life touching human sensibility. Sympathetic imagination causes the yearning to reach the good, to know how to distinguish the life that is good from that which is bad, to avoid unhappiness and suffering. Again, Plato's mythological language functions similarly to our metaphor in the Apocalypse, utilizing emotional response to aid the integration of concept and existence.

Existential Concepts

There is, of course, another dimension: symbolic language most profoundly opens perspectives of existential concepts, beliefs that are philosophical presuppositions. Thus, Socrates interprets Er's return to the body:

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[332] Plat. *Rep.* 618b-c. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

> if we are guided by me we shall believe that the soul is immortal and capable of enduring all extremes of good and evil, and so we shall hold ever to the upward way and pursue righteousness with wisdom always and ever, that we may be dear to ourselves and to the gods both during our sojourn here and when we receive our rewards, as the victors in the games go about to gather in theirs.[333]

While his philosophical account of the ideal city/state is based on reasoned argument, the guidance for Plato's ideal city fundamentally rests upon premises beyond the realm of reality. The myth of Er plays a vital role in conveying those premises. To denote essential characteristics and ideas about the best city/state Plato uses myth as evocative picture, meant to urge his readers along the path of knowledge in search for the just life, essentially reaching out beyond boundaries of what can be conveyed by means of discursive or cognitive expression. As a conclusion to Plato's *Republic,* the myth of Er as journey, full of images, contributes a vibrant significance to abstract concepts debated throughout the philosophical discourse.

5.3. Identity of the City

The myth of Er (*Rep* 614a-21d) as final climax and conclusion to Plato's dialogue about the ideal state poses questions of identity concerning human

[333] Ibid. 621c.

beings in the state. These questions are also central questions in our metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation. The myth allows for an imaginative vision of the possible, evoking an evaluation of the present life. While the path to reach the ideal city is different, the metaphor of the city and the myth of Er nevertheless fulfil similar functions: to educate the human being about possibilities of community life with regard to the ultimate goal, the ideal city or, in the Apocalypse, the city of God.

Babylon's Identity

In the Apocalypse, the textual image of the city indirectly suggests perspectives on the distant past (Babylon) and the possible future (ultimate judgment of Babylon and the city of God). These perspectives refer to human identity that ultimately is the reason for the creation or destruction of community/city life. As textual image, the identities of Babylon and the bride provoke a response from the reader/audience about the great city Babylon and the city of God. According to the Apocalypse, this is the choice between life and death, a choice, enacted by the human being. The decision over life and death becomes apparent in the story between humanity and God, a story that begins with creation and continues towards a future.

Throughout the Apocalypse, an image used deliberately to express "diverging conceptualisations" is the image of the name.[334] Cross-culturally,

[334]Aristotle mentions these "diverging conceptualisations" as a special mode of metaphorization: "to call a thing by the strange name and then to deny it some attribute of that name." Aristot. *Poet.* 1457b22. Trans. W. H. Fyfe. Available [Online] Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) The Perseus Project, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

names have always been used to describe important attributes and qualities of human beings. Plato names his city of injustice the luxurious city (τρυφῶσαν πόλιν) or fevered city (φλεγμαίνουσαν πόλιν).[335] Names can reveal the identity of a person, group, or community. The fever that is gripping the luxurious city discloses the burning appetite for luxurious goods as "illness" of her people. The actual names given to actors and places in our metaphor carry important conceptualisations for the thematic of the city as well. In the book of Revelation, names, as indirect portrayals, play an important role indirectly referring to virtues and vices, which are characteristics of human identity and as well characteristics for the community.

Like the Hebrew שֵׁם, the Greek word τὸ ὄνομα carries information about identity and essential characteristics of whom or what is named. Babylon, in the book of Revelation, is called the great one, Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, (Rev 18:21),[336] the "city, the great one"[337] or the "harlot, the great one."[338] Babylon carries engraved on her forehead a name of mystery (Rev 17:5). The metaphor of "Babylon, the great city," powerfully points to Babylon's past appearance in the world, her grandeur, as well her hypocrisy. Associations with Old Testament traditions profoundly shape the meaning of the name, Babylon. The word great, on one level, connotes Babylon's eminence, great luxury and grandiose splendour. The historian Herodotus describes the ancient city of Babylon as one of the most extraordinary and powerful cities in antiquity:

[335] Plat. *Rep.* 372e.
[336] Also Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:10, 21.
[337] Rev. 11:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21.
[338] Rev 17:1; 19:2.

> In Assyria there were many other great cities, but the most famous and the strongest was Babylon where the royal dwelling had been established..."[339]

As royal dwelling, Babylon is representative of the political and religious power of the Babylonian Empire, an empire that under Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the temple and send many Jews into exile. Brought to mind is the agonizing experience of an evil power.[340] Babylon, the great one, evokes the memory of her terrible nature and mighty, extraordinary evil power. The name also brings to life the mythological story of the Babylonian tower (Gen 11:1-9).

> Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Gen 11:4)

Babel, the city whose tower reaches the heavens, a city in which the people built to amplify their own honour in challenge of God's honour, resonates in the name Babylon. An endeavour meant to bring fame for the citizens through skilful building of extraordinary structures becomes visible in Babel (Babylon). Unveiled in Babylon's name is the sinfulness of human beings in their desire to surpass humanity, to become infinite like God since the only one who can bring honour to the name of any human being/city or nation (see Gen 12:2) is God. In the story, the unity of language as symbol for humanity's solidarity is destroyed. The attempted self-aggrandizement of the people has led to the broken unity

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[339] Hdt. 1.178. Trans. A. D. Godley, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1986) Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, February, 2000.
[340] E.g. Ps 137.1.

among human beings. The name Babylon thus vividly brings to life the symbol for discordance of humanity with God, which is discordance between human beings among each other.

In the Apocalypse, Babylon's names speak scrupulously, evoking colourful images to make visible her evil identity. Rev 11:18 reads: "the city, the great one, that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." The text offers an interesting example of illogical logic in our metaphor. The abhorred naming of Sodom and Egypt and the following interpretation "where their Lord was crucified" are in uttermost tension to splendour and grandeur of "the city, the great one" the beautiful Babylon known to Herodotus. Sodom in the Hebrew tradition,[341] a paradigmatic symbol for wickedness and Yahweh's punishment, a city, which has lost its paradise like life (Gen 13:10), a city whose inhabitants offend Yahweh (Gen 19:1-26) contributes to the identity of Babylon. Resonating are prophetic texts, which reveal Sodom's social oppression of the poor. As faithless bride, the city violates her relation with God in her disregard for the poor and needy: "This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy" (Ezek 16:49).[342]

"The city, the great one" is also likened to Egypt, the powerful country, whose leader and people have become the symbol for oppression, slavery and

[341] J. A. Loader offers an extensive analysis of the Sodom and Gomorrah traditions in the Old Testament, early Jewish and early Christian traditions. J. A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Kampen, The Netherlands: J. H. Kok 1990).

[342] In Rabbinical texts, the socio-economic aspect of the wickedness of Sodom is as well displayed. Ibid. 75-117. In accordance with our model for the metaphor of the city, we argue for associative connotations of the Sodom-image, which can embrace the whole range of traditional use, depending on the associative capacity of reader or audience. Cf. J. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities* 126.

veneration of idol gods. The name Egypt thus pictures and actualises oppression, slavery and idol worship as remembered experience from Israel's history.

> Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob-- making myself known to them in the land of Egypt-- I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God. On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. And I said to them, Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. (Ezek 20:5-7)

The climax, however, is the concluding description (Rev 11:8), referring to sinfulness in its culmination, the crucifixion of the Lord, the Son of God (Rev 2:18). It is interesting that the word κύριος, Lord, which is also used as title of God (Rev 1:8 et al.), is applied to the Son of God in one of the most striking passages in the book of Revelation: "The city, the great one, where their Lord was crucified" (Rev 11:8).[343] This extended metaphor epitomizes the sinfulness of Babylon, the great one, as identity of her citizens. Splendour and magnificence of a mighty, wonderful city is denied in her names, which bring to mind horrific memories of Israel's past as the present reality of the city Babylon.

Epitome of Sinfulness

Naming Babylon in our metaphor reveals her character and the character of her citizens. Social and economic oppression, religious oppression, self-love

[343] The name Jerusalem is not mentioned in this context. It is preserved in its purity for the vision of the heavenly city.

and self-aggrandizement, diverse dimensions of sinfulness, are metaphorical references for a community on the way towards failure, towards Nothingness, non-being. The origin for this city is not foremost lack of wisdom and education as in the fevered city of Plato. Babylon's failure has its origin in the discord between God and human beings rooted in the freedom to choose between the city of God and the evil city. The metaphor of the city that is named Egypt, Sodom and Babylon thus pictures the community of human beings who ultimately fail in their relation with God. "The city, the great one" who receives her identity from the human being reveals her offensiveness in relation to God's reign in a series of divergent metaphors, images and correlating expressions. As perspectives on the sinfulness of humanity they are revealed in the names of the city, names that refer to the history of sinfulness of the city's inhabitants, sinfulness that essentially is the choice between God or the self-proclaimed queen, Babylon, who participates in the ultimate power of evil, the beast. Metaphorically, the names "open" the past, permitting the reader/audience to remember dimensions of sinfulness against God. The history of Babylon's failure serves as guidance for the present audience and reader. Sinfulness therefore does not simply mean not being good enough. Sinfulness destroys the relation that makes community possible and in this sense destroys identity. A fundamental phenomenon in human life is given a human face. The word for sin, ἁμαρτία appears only three times in our text (Rev 1:5; 18:4, 5), yet Babylon vividly pictures human sinfulness per se, the human rejection of God, which means non-relation and therefore non-being.

Whenever a community chooses oppression, slavery and hypocrisy against God, this choice is the decision which destroys the possibility of life in community. Through this free decision, the human being becomes responsible for community life. The human being plays an active role in shaping the present community as Babylon or the beginning realization of the possibilities of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Humanizing Humanity

Both the philosophical and the biblical concept of the ideal/heavenly city/state are an attempt to surpass the evil city, the failure of human beings. Despite important similarities, the philosophical concept of an ideal city/state and the metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation, accentuate values and beliefs very differently. Our metaphor, which evokes visualization of diverging conceptual possibilities, embodies community of human beings as the city Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem. In the biblical concept, human sinfulness appears in the context of personal relations. The metaphor of the city opens perspectives on failure or fulfilment of personal relationships. This is why θυμός ultimately has a different meaning in the Greek philosophical tradition than in the book of Revelation. Instead of signifying the inclination of the individual soul,[344] it refers to the personal relationship between God and humanity. In the Apocalypse, θυμός is used as expression for the passionate longing of Babylon (Rev 18:3) but also God's wrath (Rev 15:1). Love is not an abstract concept in the Apocalypse. The bond between God and Babylon is visualized as sensual

[344] Cf. Plat. *Rep.* 439d-e.

experience of lover and loved ones. Not only Babylon's love which culminates in her pride and leads her to reject God but also God's judgment is passionate, signifying that the bond still is not ultimately broken. Salvation from the evil city, in contrast to deliverance from the soul's captivity, cannot primarily be found in wisdom but in the loving relationship to God. The play on the word θυμός in the book of Revelation opens the image of love towards the possibility of love carried beyond rejection of the loved one.

In the Apocalypse, it is evoked as sensual experience, a picture that draws its effectiveness from life experience itself. Not knowledge and understanding of right conduct builds the new ideal community but entering the right relation to God and the Lamb. The choice for community as failing or for an ideal community is pictured in analogy to the human relationship in its most intimate form in the bond of marriage. The relationship involves the whole person. As participants encouraging textual visuality of our metaphor, the readers/audience of the Apocalypse are not outside observers but an integral part of the story. The path to achieve the right relation is not education, but belief in the one and only God.

Body versus Soul

Human sinfulness, pictured as failure of intimate relation, appears fundamentally different from Plato's rationalization about the origin of the ideal and the luxurious city. In the philosophical texts θυμός is used to indicate the double inclination of the individual soul. Signified as noble wrath, a natural ally of reason and mere angry passion, it includes various aspects of the soul. Central to Plato's concept of the best city/state is the idea of harmony and unity. Plato's

primary unifying principle is the idea of the good, taught to young men and women. His city/state includes all those whose souls are enlightened by reason. According to Plato, excellence of deliberation and virtue and consequently of rule, can only be achieved through the moral or intellectual self, situated in the soul.[345] The soul, from the beginning corporal and composite, is also from the beginning a mover, characterized by the strong yearning to ascend towards the idea of the good. The soul has a double inclination towards good and evil, an inclination, which ultimately rests on the life any human being has chosen whether it is a life of justice or injustice.[346] While the imagery in our metaphor embraces bodily characteristics to stimulate thought and imagination, reasoned argumentation in the philosophical discourse is an attempt to avoid the suggestiveness and persuasive quality, characteristic for the metaphor of the body. Reasoned argument and non-figurative concepts dominate philosophical language.

The concept of the soul denotes essential aspects of the human being. For a philosopher like Plato corporal desire encloses the soul in the body like a "prison."[347] According to Plato, the human soul has a double likeness. The soul is not evil or good. The soul rather plays the role of a principle of possible inclination toward opposite directions, towards the earthly, which for the city/state is injustice or towards the heavenly, which means justice.[348] Plato

[345] Ibid. 353e.
[346] Ibid.248 b also *Rep.* 618a-b.
[347] Plat. *Crat.* 400c. Trans. H. N. Fowler, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1977) Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
[348] Plat. *Rep.* 352c-354a, 434c-445b.

builds his ideal state from the distinction between evil and good, which he situates in the inclination of the soul of any citizen. To describe the soul, Plato himself recognizes that this is "a matter of utterly superhuman and long discourse."[349] Plato acknowledges that his concept of the ideal state/city essentially is rooted in metaphysical belief.

For Plato, the soul, serving unlimited desire, constitutes the unhappy human being, the luxurious city and war; this is the self-inflicted judgment of the human being upon him/herself. The feverish, luxurious city exists in the failure of her citizens to exercise control over unlimited desire, ἐπιθυμητικόν. Desire that is not controlled by the rational part of the soul, λογιστικόν, constitutes the city of injustice. For the philosophical idea of the double inclination of the soul, the luxurious and the ideal city reflect the individual polarity of existence. Therefore, Plato centres his discussion about the luxurious city on concupiscence, desire of the soul that never seems to be satisfied, yet can be controlled through education and wisdom. The part chosen from this polarity of existence, rooted in the double inclination of the soul, marks an important difference to the heavenly and the earthly city. The focus of the philosophical concept is the individual human soul, while the biblical concept emphasizes sinfulness in the context of relation among human beings and God and humans. In other words, the city is not conceived as philosophical idea,[350] the city is envisioned as metaphor of mutual relation among the citizens and God brought to conscious realization in the metaphor of the body.

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[349] Plat. *Phaedrus* 246a. Trans. H. N. Fowler, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1966) Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project*, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
[350] Ibid. 592 b.

5.4. City of Love versus City of Virtue

The philosophical as well as the biblical text utilize poetic-mythic language to point beyond the means of space and time, beyond the means of reasoned discourse, to the vision of the imaginative possible, the world of belief. The myth of Er, in concluding the ethical discussion about the ideal state, leads back to the original foundation of the philosophical discourse, which is rooted in belief. Thus, Socrates can explain about the myth of Er:

> the tale was saved, as the saying is, and was not lost. And it will save us if we believe it, and we shall safely cross the River of Lethe, and keep our soul unspotted from the world.[351]

Plato in the *Republic* names his ideal city καλλίπολις, the beautiful city, created by most highly educated disciplined guardians and the virtue of its citizens. The origin of this ideal city ultimately is the "idea of the good," which is evoked through education and right knowledge. The reward for the ones who serve in the name of the good, holding office for the city's sake, is described as follows:

> We shall require them to turn upwards the vision of their souls and fix their gaze on that which sheds light on all, and when they have thus beheld the good itself they shall use it as a pattern for the right ordering of the state and the citizens and themselves throughout the remainder of their lives, each in his turn, devoting the greater part of their time to the

[351] Plat. *Rep.* 621c. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

> study of philosophy, but when the turn comes for each, toiling in the service of the state and holding office for the city's sake, regarding the task not as a fine thing but a necessity; and so, when each generation has educated others like themselves to take their place as guardians of the state, they shall depart to the Islands of the Blest and there dwell. And the state shall establish public memorials and sacrifices for them as to divinities if the Pythian oracle approves or, if not, as to divine and godlike men.[352]

City of Love

While the island of the blest awaits the guardians who have fulfilled their duty, the reward for those who do not become citizens of Babylon is the holy city Jerusalem (Rev 21:2, 10), the sacred city belonging to God. No other space carries such belief and hope for Jewish people as Jerusalem. As "city of God, holy habitation of the Most High" (Ps 46:4) the historical city holds the privileged position among other cities. Since God's covenant with David (2 Sam 7), Jerusalem has been the appointed place for God's people, God's holy place. This hope and trust in the city of God is pictured in the book of Revelation as a vision of the "the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev 21:2). As holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem is the city dedicated to God who is the Holy One (Rev 4:8). Throughout its history, Jerusalem has occupied a privileged position, a tradition that certainly is reflected in our text:

> And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: "See, the home of God is among human beings, he will live with them and they will be his people, and he himself, God will be with them and be their God." (Rev 21:3)

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[352] Ibid. 540a-c.

The physical destruction of Jerusalem 587 BCE by Nebuchadnezzar could not change the belief in this holiest of places for Jewish people. It is transformed into a new trust for Jerusalem's final restoration (Zec 2:2-5). Overall, Israel's hope was centred on a strong belief in the political restoration of the earthly Jerusalem. Yet Isa 65:17-25 and in particular apocalyptic texts like 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra picture an expectation, which is oriented towards the future of the earthly city. 4 Ezra provides a dramatic example in which the "movement from a rational to a visionary mode of cognition" transforms present reality into future expectation.[353] As in the transformation of the mourning woman in 4 Ezra, the heavenly Jerusalem evokes the vision and destiny of the earthly city.[354] The textual image of the city in the Apocalypse inspires a dynamic and all encompassing concept of the heavenly city, which includes the heavenly and the earthly realm.

> And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had gone away and the sea is no more. And I saw the city, the holy one, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, made beautiful for her husband. (Rev 21:1-2)

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[353] P. F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* esp.118-30.

[354] For the historic development of reference towards an eschatological heavenly Jerusalem see: A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: studies in the role of the heavenly dimension in Paul's thought with special reference to his eschatology* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press 1981) 18-22; B. Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Freiburg, Wien, Rom: Herder 1987) esp. 34-48.

The New Jerusalem depicts the future as possibility of a holy city for the present. This future is rooted in the already given promise of God's creation (Rev 21:6) and God's covenant with his people (Rev 21:6). It becomes the vision of a possible community, which is coming down from heaven whenever Babylon is defeated. It becomes reality in the act of human beings, which fulfils God's promise in this world. In other words, the spatially qualified concept of the city coming down from heaven allows for the relevance of the heavenly possibility on earth, here and now. Yet neither spatial nor temporal references are a copy of reality in this textual image. The defeat of Babylon is not an event happening at a fixed moment in history; it is happening whenever the human being enters the right relation with the neighbour, God and the Lamb. Time and space in the metaphor are dynamic concepts depending on their completion through human imagination and action.

Love, compassion are evoked in felt sympathetic imagination, not in the sense of dangerous desire to be controlled by the rational part of the soul but as source providing life. Accordingly, Augustine portrays the nature of the holy city as formed by the "love of God."[355] Yet the word love, ἀγάπη, appears only three times in the book of Revelation (Rev 2:4,19; 3:19).[356] The fact that the poetic images in the Apocalypse are a quite different utilization of language from other texts of the New Testament has startled many readers. The violent imagery and apparent lack of expressions for love have always been a critical

[355] Augustine, *Civ. Dei.* (XIV 28).

[356] The verb ἀγαπάω appears an additional four times (Rev 1:5; 1:9; 12:11; 22:15).

point of discussion.[357] Yet such a critique does not appreciate the book's metaphorical language, which provides multifaceted perspectives on love as textual image. The marriage metaphor certainly is a most prominent perspective among others. The differing perspectives on the city as bride and city as harlot are a metaphorical "meditation" on the many nuances of love in analogy to the human bond of marriage. A metaphorical "meditation" explores relation up to its rupture, including sorrow, passionate longing, pain, suffering and death. The Son of God, the Lamb that has been slaughtered (Rev 5:6) is the utmost metaphor for unlimited love. This love is God who has become human as the Son of God and has taken on life in the city Babylon. This love is God who has become citizen of Babylon like human beings until death. This love opens space for a new relation between God and humanity, a new creation, a city of life after the first death. This love allows for the possibility of a new city, a city, which includes all those who are patiently enduring for the name of the Son of God (Rev 2:3), the ones who suffer (Rev 2:10), the ones who carry the burden of oppression and complete destitution (Rev 2:9). The heavenly city is a community characterized by compassionate love.

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[357] See esp. Seán Kealy's article: "At a Loss When Faced with Apocalyptic," 285-302. Such language prompted Martin Luther to deny that the book of Revelation had the character of an apostolic witness. In his preface to the September Testament he concluded that Christ is neither taught nor known in it:

> Ich sage was ich fule / Myr mangellt an disem buch nit eynerley / das ichs wider Apostolisch noch prophetisch hallte....das Christus / drynnen widder geleret noch erkandt wirt / wilchs doch zu thun fur allen dingen eyn Apostel schuldig ist / … Darumb bleyb ich bey den buchern / die myr Christum hell und reyn dar geben.

M. Luther, "Vorhede auff die offinbarung Sanct Johannis" in Nachdruck des in der Universitätsbibliothek Halle/Saale befindlichen Originals von: M. Luther, *Septembertestament 1522* (Witten, Berlin: Cansteinsche Bibelanstalt).

The space of the holy city becomes an expression for God's relation to the human being, the "Son of God" (Rev 2:18), the "holy one, the true one, who has the key of David" (Rev, 3:7). It also metaphorically pictures the community of people, the ones who are promised to have written on themselves:

> the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, from my God and, my own new name (Rev 3:12).

The image of the marriage between the Lamb and the bride extends metaphorically to the transcendence of any human loving relation to its fulfilment, life. As metaphor of the city, the "bride made beautiful for her husband" (Rev 21:2) opens a vision of community, rooted in love between God, the holy One, and the human being. As the "bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9), the community has surpassed the fundamental violation of the relationship to God, pictured vividly as Babylon. In other words, the heavenly Jerusalem is coming down from heaven, whenever the loving relation between God and human beings, however partially, becomes reality in this world, whenever compassion among the citizens replaces oppression, exploitation and hypocrisy. Jerusalem is coming down from heaven if the future city is imagined as city of God and this possibility made reality through actions of human beings.

The throne as symbol for God's and the Lamb's power thus inspires the idea of a very different reign in comparison to that of the philosopher king of the ideal city/state of Plato and Aristotle. The king who has become human opens the holy city for the faithful to share the throne with God and the Lamb (Rev 3:21), a city of light where the nations and the kings will bring their glory (Rev

21:24). For a city founded on compassion, there is no need for the gates to be locked (Rev 21:25). As a community where God's love finally has transcended the discordance between God and human beings and the discord among human beings among each other, this new city is not based on status, not based on birth, wisdom or social and economic human achievements. Not guardians and philosophers, who have gained the greatest amount of knowledge, education and wisdom, rule in this city. On the contrary, it is a city that is reigned through God and "Jesus Christ the faithful witness" (Rev 1:5), a city ruled by the power of the Lamb that has been crucified and those faithful who compassionately share oppression even to death (Rev 2:10), the ones who carry God's name on their foreheads (Rev 22:4). Compassion conveyed persuasively in the image of bodily love, inspires sympathetic thought, imagination, and visuality towards love that transcends human reality, towards life fulfilled.

5.5. Metaphorical Language versus Philosophical Reasoning

In the *Republic* Socrates suggests that the poets should be banished from the ideal city:

"Then, Glaucon," said I, "when you meet encomiasts of Homer who tell us that this poet has been the educator of Hellas, and that for the conduct and refinement of human life he is worthy of our study and devotion, and that we should order our entire lives by the guidance of this poet, we must love and salute them as doing the best they can, and concede to them that Homer is the most poetic of poets and the first of tragedians, but we must know the truth, that we can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and the praises of good men. For if you grant admission to the honeyed muse in lyric or epic, pleasure and pain will be lords of your city instead of law and that which shall from time to time have approved itself to the general reason as the best." "Most true," he said. [358]

Criticism Concerning Myth

According to Plato, myth is full of ambiguities. Foremost, myth functions akin to painting as imitation or copy of reality and thus causes confusion between reality and appearance. It allows for multiple representations and multiple interpretations.

"Consider, then, this very point. To which is painting directed in every case, to the imitation of reality as it is or of appearance as it appears? Is it an imitation of a phantasm or of the truth?" "Of a phantasm," he said. "Then the mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, the reason why it can produce everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom; as, for example, a painter, we say, will paint us a cobbler, a carpenter, and other craftsmen, though he himself has no expertness in any of these arts, but nevertheless if he were a good painter, by exhibiting at a distance his picture of a carpenter he would deceive children and foolish men, and make them believe it to be a real carpenter."[359]

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[358] Plat. *Rep.* 606 e. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
[359] Ibid.598b-c.

In this passage, Plato explicitly uses visual images to exemplify the "phantom" myth can represent through mimetic arts. The work of the painter and accordingly mimetic arts are called deceit; only children and foolish men, people whose critical senses are not developed, will not be able to discern its imitative and therefore false function. In contrast to philosophical discourse, myth does not develop logical, falsifiable arguments to support its message. Myth is unfalisfiable, especially since the places or time referred to in mythological stories are impossible to verify. Yet since the characters and places in myth are part of a tradition, this imitation serves as powerful evocation. Myth incorporates considerable persuasive power and is most influential because it addresses the emotions. The hostility against mythic language in Plato's thought partly originates from his overall idea: art in general and mythic or poetic language in particular are mere imitations of an ideal archetype. The artist, whose work is especially rooted in the senses, performs imitation in "form of a play." This is treacherous since it lends credence to things far removed from true wisdom, which appear "beautiful to the ignorant multitude." With dire irony, Socrates portrays the mind of the poet in regard to truthfulness inherent in his creations as "most charming!"

> "Then the imitator will neither know nor opine rightly concerning the beauty or the badness of his imitations." "It seems not." "Most charming, then, would be the state of mind of the poetical imitator in respect of true wisdom about his creations." "Not at all." "Yet still he will none the less imitate, though in every case he does not know in what way the thing is bad or good. But, as it seems, the thing he will imitate will be the thing that appears beautiful to the ignorant multitude." "Why, what else?" "On this, then, as it

> seems, we are fairly agreed, that the imitator knows nothing worth mentioning of the things he imitates, but that imitation is a form of play, not to be taken seriously, and that those who attempt tragic poetry, whether in iambics or heroic verse, are all altogether imitators." "By all means." [360]

In its likeness to the art of painting, myth reinstates entities from another world as if they were part of the sensible world. This power of persuasiveness, however, is not necessarily used to communicate truth. Plato deliberately disagrees with the idea that myth-tellers and poets are able to generate illusions. Thus, false beliefs can easily be evoked because images that carry affiliation of sameness to the sensible world are confused to be facts.

Plato in particular argues against the tradition associated with Homer, because the portrayal of gods and heroes provides the people with an untrue picture of virtuous characters. It suggests heroic deeds under the cover of most unethical values and behaviour. Considering that these poetic texts were dominating Greek education in school as well as in dramatic representation, the influence of these poets must have been considerable. Plato would have liked to eliminate the disturbing persuasive influence myth and poetry can have on the human being.

Interestingly, as we have seen in the myth of Er, this outspoken critique however, does not hinder Plato from introducing poetic-mythological language most ingeniously throughout his dialogues. Plato himself is very much aware of the important persuasive function myth can fulfil as an educator of basic goals and values shared by the members of the community. Myth is needed to shape

[360] Ibid. 602 a-b.

the souls of the ordinary people that is, the great majority of human beings who are not philosophers.[361] However, only certain myths are apt to educate the soul, insofar as they transmit knowledge recognized by the philosophers. The validity of the myth is thus depending on the philosophical discourse that serves as explicatory model.[362] In that sense, the myth of Er in the *Republic* is an extension of the previous argument, explicating the rewards that the just man receives:

> "Such then while he lives are the prizes, the wages, and the gifts that the just man receives from gods and men in addition to those blessings which justice herself bestowed." "And right fair and abiding rewards," he said. "Well, these," I said, "are nothing in number and magnitude compared with those that await both after death. And we must listen to the tale of them," said I, "in order that each may have received in full what is due to be said of him by our argument." "Tell me," he said, "since there are not many things to which I would more gladly listen." "It is not, let me tell you," said I, "the tale to Alcinous told that I shall unfold, but the tale of a warrior bold, Er, the son of Armenius, by race a Pamphylian.[363]

While Plato recognizes and employs myth as useful instrument of persuasion, he subordinates it to philosophical discourse. Truth or falsity of the myth depends on the conformity with the argumentative discourse.

Aristotle in the *Poetics* deliberately adopts the Platonic theory that poetry is a mere imitation of the world yet interprets it anew. Aristotle treats

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[361] Plat. *Rep.* 377c.
[362] L. Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* Trans. G. Naddaf 109-21.
[363] Plat. *Rep.* 613e-14b. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

poetry and myth as incentive for ideas.[364] Poetic language is preferable to reasoned discourse since the effect of "convincing impossibility" opens the thought process for the possible as reference towards ideas and truth:

> In general any "impossibility" may be defended by reference to the poetic effect or to the ideal or to current opinion. For poetic effect a convincing impossibility is preferable to that which is unconvincing though possible. It may be impossible that there should be such people as Zeuxis used to paint, but it would be better if there were; for the type should improve on the actual.[365]

Aristotle thus explicitly emphasizes the important quality of poetic-mythic language to extend language into the realm of the possible.

Question of Truth

Plato's strategy in the *Republic* to expel Homeric inheritance and abolish language that evokes visualization and dramatization on stage has left a long lasting legacy of suspicion against poetic-mythic language. Plato criticizes myth as inferior to argumentative, philosophical discourse because it lacks conclusiveness and is characterized by multiple referents and evocative imagery. Its power of persuasiveness is extremely dangerous. On the contrary, philosophical language offers a perceptible referent and therefore is less likely to mislead the reader/audience. Consequently, as long as philosophical discourse

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[364] An excellent commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* can be found in *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* Trans. and critical notes by S. H. Butcher (New York: Dover Publications 1951).

[365] Aristot. *Poet.* 1461b. Trans. W.H. Fyfe. Available [Online] Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

focuses on intelligible forms and is structured according to the rules of logic, it allows for reasoned conclusion and judgment. Dialectical reasoning using words and concepts not images allows for deduction of all things from a transcendental principle, or pure idea. Plato contrasts reason (λόγος), whose objects are the intelligible forms, with true opinion, whose objects are the sciences and the arts. Mythical discourse is unfalsifiable because its referent is outside time and space and therefore inaccessible to reasoned argumentation. Its assumptions are not falsifiable because they are based on assumptions that are "arbitrary starting points".

> "Understand then," said I, "that by the other section of the intelligible I mean that which the reason itself lays hold of by the power of dialectics treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses, underpinnings, footings, and springboards so to speak, to enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting-point of all, and after attaining to that again taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion, making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas and ending with ideas. " "I understand," he said; "not fully, for it is no slight task that you appear to have in mind, but I do understand that you mean to distinguish the aspect of reality and the intelligible, which is contemplated by the power of dialectic, as something truer and more exact than the object of the so-called arts and sciences whose assumptions are arbitrary starting-points.[366]

[366] Plato *Rep.* 511-12. Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
Also Plato *Tim.* 51d-e. For an in depth discussion on Plato's theory on myth in contrast to argumentative discourse see; L. Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* Trans. G. Naddaf esp. 89-115.

Plato's critique must raise a suspicion against the textual visuality of our metaphor. Is the image of the city in the Apocalypse a charming phantom, far removed from true wisdom? Reasoned discourse provides interesting perspectives regarding the historic present of the philosophers' world or the world of experience.[367] Yet reflections upon what was true or will be true cannot effectively be conveyed via this kind of dialectical reasoning. The world of the distant past or the entire future, the world of tradition and the world of the possible require other modes of expression. Aristotle in his *Poetics* demonstrates that history, as story primarily based on facts cannot reveal the possible. For Aristotle, poetic[368] language is the medium which transforms facts into possibility and reveals the universal through the particular. Aristotle contends:

> For this reason poetry is something closer to true examination and more serious than history, since poetry tends to speak general truths while history gives particular facts.[369]

Through the medium of sensuous images, poetry as well as myth and metaphorical narratives ultimately aim at general truth. Not as general system of thought but in the search for the principle of things, mythological and metaphorical language is akin to philosophy. Here, our image of the city as highly evocative image opens space for exploring the dimensions of the traditional past and the possible future. Moreover, visuality speaks to the senses and is thus a strong incentive to appropriate the text to life itself. Abstract

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[367] Ibid. 100-11.
[368] In the current context, "poetic" is used in the sense of inventive creation of a narration of past, present, or future (Plat. *Rep.* 392d also Plat. *Phaedo* 61b).
[369] Aristot. *Poet.* 1451b. Trans. Eva Maria Räpple.

philosophical concepts are much less likely to stimulate a far-reaching reader/audience response. In that sense, philosophical language affects the readers/audience very differently and consequently does not carry the persuasive power characteristic for myth and metaphorical narratives.

Interestingly, Plato does not enclose his discourse within the limits of the immediate present as expressed in argumentative philosophical language. On the contrary, despite his compelling opposition to the arbitrary character of myth and poetic language he most ingenuously ventures out into dimensions of visionary evocative language. The evocative power of mythological language, extending the boundaries of argumentative discourse, has rarely been exploited more skilfully than in Plato's myths in his *Republic,* among those the myth of Er. As Luc Brisson rightly emphasizes, for Plato the truth or falsity of a myth depends on its conformity with a discourse raised to a normative level that is philosophical reasoning.[370] Accordingly, Plato effectively utilizes the paradigmatic quality of poetic-mythical language throughout his work to illuminate his philosophical reasoning and, in regard to his concept of the ideal city, convey dimensions of the city/community beyond the intelligible world. The question, whether philosophical language or myth and metaphor are the rightful means to convey truth poses the wrong antagonism. What differs is the effectiveness and power to communicate existential ideas not the truth itself, which always is already beyond any language attempt.

[370] L. Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* Trans. G. Naddaf 109-11.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has been designed as a conversation between different ideas and values that constitute the identity of the city in the book of Revelation and the philosophical deliberations of Plato and Aristotle about the ideal city/state. For Plato and Aristotle the identity of the city/state originates from the individual polarity of existence, which is the double inclination of the soul towards the heavenly or the earthly. Plato centres his deliberations for the luxurious city on concupiscence, desire of the soul that never seems to be satisfied, yet can be controlled through education and wisdom. Accordingly, the ones best suited to rule the city/state are the philosophers, those who savour "the delight that true being and reality brings."[371]

Historic Influence

Since the second century C. E., Plato's perception of the soul has been influential for Christian theological and philosophical deliberations. Plato did not actually interpret the body as evil in his reflections about the soul. However, the fundamental polarity between the rational and desire did prepare the path on which the biblical tradition of the female city could merge with the notion of the "body as an enclosure to keep it [the soul] safe, like a prison"[372] Similarities between Plato's perception of the body and the soul and Christian images certainly inspired interpreters to merge akin ideas in succeeding theological and

[371] Ibid. 582c.
[372] Plat. *Crat.* 400c. Trans. H. N. Fowler. Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

philosophical discourse. The fusing of ideas is the more conceivable since the body represents the physical as well as symbolic body. The metaphor of the city as woman, harlot and queen as well as the act of violation characterized through sexual imagery gave rise to interpretations in which desire of the soul would centre on sexual desire. We will not be able to follow the historical path of these merging ideas of which Augustine's book XIV in his *City of God* certainly is one of the most famous examples. Augustine roots the fall of humanity in Gen 3:1 ff principally in sexual, carnal lust:

> Far be it, then, from us to suppose that our parents in Paradise felt that lust which caused them afterwards to blush and hide their nakedness...for it was after sin that lust began. It was after sin that our nature, having lost the power it had over the whole body, but not having lost all the shame, perceived, noticed, blushed at, and covered it (*City of God* XIV 21).[373]

Whether the human soul dominates the corruptible body or flesh or is susceptible to the vices of the desirous body defines Augustine's two conflicting cities: one where human beings live according to the flesh, the earthly city, the other according to the spirit, the heavenly city. In this interpretation, the emphasis on sexual love closely relates ontological sinfulness with the physical human body. Peter Brown concludes regarding Augustine's deliberations on the *concupiscentia carnis*: "Sexuality was effectively taken from the physiological

[373] Augustine, *The City of God* Trans. M. Dods (New York: Modern Library 1993) 468.

context and made to mirror an abiding, unhealed fissure of the soul."[374] This should have important consequences for the interpretation of the metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation since the correlation between physical and symbolic body is one of its evocative images. It gives rise to thought and opens new perspectives. It becomes false at the point where the "is" of the metaphor is not any longer understood as metaphorical but as an absolute "is."

Humanity in Community

The textual image presents a comprehensive picture, which links the larger cosmopolitan society with the Christian community consisting of individual community members. In Rev 2:1-3:22, the communities are addressed as *ἡ ἐκκλησία*, located in major cosmopolitan centres in the Roman Empire. The word *ἡ ἐκκλησία* is usually translated as Church, a term that has become a distinctively Christian expression (Matt 16:18 et. al.). However, its roots can be traced in the Old Testament as well as in Greek history. In the LXX, it is used as translation for קָהָל which signifies the assembly or people of God (Deut 31:30 et. al.). In Greek texts, the term denotes a duly summoned assembly (Thuc. 2.60; Hdt. 3.142 et. al.). While the Greek usage correlates *ἡ ἐκκλησία* with the political assembly of citizens, the term also carries the Old Testament meaning of the community under God's theocracy. The term *ἡ ἐκκλησία* as reference to an assembly of citizens thus connects the seven communities with the overall idea of the city (πόλις) most prominently visualized in Rev 17:1-18:24 and 21:1-22:5. The choice of seven communities further pictures the broadening notion

[374] P. Brown, *Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University 1988) 417-18. This very insightful study offers an excellent overview of the history of

from a city community to all communities/cities since in the Hebrew tradition the number seven often signifies completion.[375] In that sense, the single communities appear as representatives for all Christian communities. The textual image of the city thus includes dimensions of community from the smallest unit to the cosmopolitan vision of the heavenly city. Christian community is finally envisioned as the ideal cosmopolitan city under God's and the Lamb's rule (Rev 21:1-22:5), distinctively disclosing perspectives on possibilities for community in this world. At the same time, the unfolding textual image directs and redirects Christians towards the ideal city/community, the heavenly city.

The Greek word *ἡ ἐκκλησία* in correlation with the idea of the city (πόλις), as assembly of citizens, brings about a critical call for the members of the community *(ἐκκλησία)* to take on responsibility for the greater society. The members of the communities in Asia Minor, addressed in the seven proclamations (Rev 1:19-3:22), are called to decide what kind of city they will contribute to, which is their fulfilment or failure in the relation with God and the Lamb (e.g. Rev 3:12). Yet as textual image coined in mythic-poetic language, the vision in the Apocalypse embraces dimensions beyond the historic present. In the textual image, the realization of the past and vision of the future possibility allows for critical evaluation of the present historic community. Moreover, as extended metaphor, the textual image of the city can stimulate meaningful interpretations concerning differing historical situations as well. In

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sexuality and sexual renunciation in the early church.

[375] See Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 101-2. Trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody: Hendrickson 1993) 15.

that sense, it is not exclusively limited to any specific moment in history. Insofar as the textual image of the city transcends particular historicity, it continues to be valuable for reader/audience in many different historical political situations. The evocative power of metaphorical language, referring to universal questions about humanity, therefore enables a response from reader/audience, in which the textual image of the city can become relevant for a specific historical political situation. This political reference is often overlooked and (ἐκκλησία) has only recently again been interpreted in its essential, fundamental critique of the greater society (πόλις) in the book of Revelation.[376] However, a kind of apolitical interpretation confines the Christian community to the circle of the church-community without bearing on the greater society, its problems, ideologies and utopias.

Abstract Concepts Versus Metaphor

The conversation between Plato and Aristotle's philosophical concept of an ideal city and the textual image in the Apocalypse reveals humanity in

[376] For example, H. Strathmann in a lexicon article on the city subsumes the usage of πόλις in the New Testament as completely unpolitical. Πόλις means simply a united human settlement in contrast with deserted regions, fields, villages and individual dwellings:

> Der Gebrauch von πόλις ist demnach im NT ganz und gar unpolitisch. Πόλις bedeutet einfach die *geschlossene menschliche Siedlung,* im Gegensatz zu unbewohnten Gegenden, Fluren, Dörfern und einzelnen Häusern.

Hermann Strathmann, "Polis," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament,* G. Friedrich ed. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 1959) VI, 529. But cf. modern liberation hermeneutics chapter 1.2.

community. The core for both concepts is the relation between human beings. In the philosophical concept of the ideal/best city/state the bond between human beings is the common pursuit of the good, which is an abstract idea that becomes meaningful through the concept of virtues and vices. Consequently, the goal for community is the education of the citizens in their pursuit of a virtuous life. The metaphor of the city as woman also pictures community in terms of relationship, with the image of marriage as prominent analogy for the relation between humanity and God. Yet while a catalogue of virtues and vices is mentioned Rev 21:8; 22:15, exciting images evoking human characteristics are most impressive throughout the book of Revelation. Overall, the language employed to refer to community is shaped by paradigmatic images like the women, the bride and the harlot. The two antithetical cities Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem epitomize possibilities regarding character/identity of human beings. As Plato reminds us these images can be misleading. Yet he also acknowledges in the Timaeus that the blessing of vision was bestowed on the human being "that we might behold the revolutions of Reason in the Heaven and use them for the revolvings of the reasoning that is within us."[377] The ability to visualize is all-important in understanding non-visual concepts and the role of imagery is not easily replaced. Iris Murdoch articulates the differences between philosophical terminology and dimensions of metaphorical language in a modern debate about human conduct:

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[377] Plat. *Tim.* Trans. W.R.M. Lamb, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1925) Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

> It makes sense to speak of a loving God, a person, but very little sense to speak of loving Good, a concept. 'Good' even as a fiction is not likely to inspire, or even be comprehensible to, more than a small number of mystically minded people who, being reluctant to surrender 'God', fake up 'Good' in his image, so as to preserve some kind of hope. The picture is not only purely imaginary, it is not very likely to be effective.[378]

The attempt to eliminate metaphoricity means risking the possibility of providing lifeless concepts or disguised substitutes for traditional images. The goal in the biblical text is not an abstract idea of the good in human life, but relation pictured in analogy to human experience. Its dependency on human sensual experience incorporates the danger of abuse, so vividly criticized in Plato's work. Yet as metaphorical language, rooted in the sense-experienced world, it is a strong incentive for imagination to link this world with an ordered universal, in a Christian context, God and the Lamb. Metaphorical language means that the vision of the heavenly city is not completed, yet. Because it provokes the imagination, because it is a textual image that is still fragmentary of its possibility of fulfilment, it is a task to be worked on.

Harmony Versus Visionary Possibility

For Plato, harmony of the city/state essentially rests on the harmony of the individual soul. Conflict needs to be avoided or managed.[379] The belief in the unity and harmony of both the individual soul and the city/state is very

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[378] I. Murdoch, *Existentalists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* P. Conradi ed. (New York: Penguin 1998) 358-59.
[379] See A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue, A Study in Moral Theory* 153 also see G. M. Freeman *The Heavenly Kingdom: Aspects of Political Thought in the Talmud and Midrash* 2-3.

different from the personal relation between God and the human being in the Apocalypse! The metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse differs fundamentally from the philosophical harmonious city/state, in which an aristocratic elite controls power in the city through education and wisdom. To a considerable degree, the philosophically ordered system achieves harmony by means of exclusion of those who are disadvantaged because of status, heritage, ability or birth. For a modern eye, the Greek ideal city does not appear ideal. Even if the citizens are sharing goods, as Plato proposes, this elite concept still excludes the majority of people from the ideal city/state, especially children, slaves, in general non-citizens. In that sense, the metaphor of the city as incentive to envision a community that is fulfilment provides a challenging vision in relation to the philosophical idea of an ideal city as not yet completed concept. The heavenly city is not a harmonized system but a metaphor.

The marriage between the bride and the Lamb in the biblical metaphor of the heavenly city offers paradoxical language. Yet the paradox is incentive to envision a community of mutual relation, a possible ideal city, in which power essentially is the power of love. God's power, the power of "the Lamb that was slaughtered" (Rev 17:14 et al.) and the power of those who follow does not permit itself to logical thought. Language explodes in the metaphorical paradox because the bond between God and human beings as well as human beings among each other transcends and transforms any worldly city. Metaphorical language differentiates the heavenly city from the Greek philosophical ideal city by its capacity to unleash new possibilities. The metaphor of marriage between the city as bride and the Son of God gives rise to thoughts about community, where there will not be tears, death, grief, crying or pain any more (Rev 21:4). It

is a vision that is provoked by the surprising image of the marriage between the bride and the Lamb as husband who epitomizes the inglorious rule of "the Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev 17:14), who is the "Lamb that was slaughtered" (Rev 13:8 et al.). In contrast to the power of the guardians, the Lamb's power rests in sacrificial love, which is the power of compassion, God engaged in history in the Son of God. Power in the Apocalypse referred to in paradoxical metaphorical language allows for surprising perspectives and possibilities on the question of power. In the Lamb, conflict as expression of love, love that endures even in the moment of greatest injustice, ultimately brings about life, which is the city of God. In that sense, the metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse is a vision that does not allow for the harmony of the system provided in the Greek philosophical ideal city. Possibilities of a different community are evoked, in which conflict provides the critical incentive to think more and to work on the completion of the fragmentary picture of the city.

The textual image provokes the search for possibility of ultimate fulfilment, of life, which worldly kingship cannot fully provide. As kingdom of God and the Lamb, the metaphor of the city vigorously questions the claim for the promised wholeness of life under human control. The heavenly city can never be under human control alone. Historic, political concepts are only fragmentary representations of the possibilities of the city of God.[380] Yet as

[380] No conventional political terminology can ever completely encompass "kingship of love" and consequently does not provide adequate terminology for the heavenly Jerusalem. Cf. e.g. D. Georgi who describes the New Jerusalem as democratic city. "Die Visionen vom himmlischen Jerusalem in Apk 21 und 22" 361, 68.

critique to these concepts, the metaphor of the city is a fascinating incentive to imagine possibilities of a Christian city/community and an encouragement to change the fragmentary present world. The textual image, as paradoxical metaphorical expression for the overall Christian community, offers a powerful provocation for Christians to work on the community, a community that is actively extending itself as larger cosmopolitan society and community of the state. The message of the book therefore is not only encouragement for the "faithful to persevere,"[381] it is not only an individual, personal relation with Christ, but also an incentive to actively engage in changing the earthly Babylon. It is an incentive to imagine and to begin to implement the rule of God and the Lamb. The belief in the gift of the city as kingdom of God and the Lamb can provoke critical action that often will be in controversy with the historical reign of any worldly kingdom. The text as "fragmentary image" assigns the beginning of completion of the fragmentary to the reader/audience, the beginning of realization of the possible. However, as history has proven too many times, the heavenly city can become a dangerous political vision if the fragmentary character of the picture is forgotten. The vision becomes ideology if the "is" in the metaphor is not longer understood as a metaphorical but as an absolute "is"!

[381] S. R. Garrett, "Revelation" in: C. A. Newsom, S. H. Ringe eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Westminster: John Knox 1992) 378. The incentive to action in the text is often overlooked.

6. Rhetoric of the Metaphor

Until this point, we have followed differing possible referential dimensions of our metaphor of the city, which open viable universal perspectives, and provide incentives for thought and textual visuality. Our comparison and contrast with Plato's and Aristotle's philosophical ideas about an ideal city/state allowed us to conceive important characteristics of the idea of an ideal city as they appear in Greek philosophical discussions and the metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation. The goal was to understand core values and beliefs forming the idea of an ideal city via comparison and contrast with discursive practices in antiquity. Moreover, the context of dialogue between philosophical and metaphorical language sharpened awareness for efficacy of different modes of language. In contrast to the abstract conceptualisation in the Greek philosophical texts, the language in the Apocalypse actively engages imaginative thought and visuality to explore the possible reality of the idea of the city. Metaphorical language is a compelling invitation to explore horizons of possibility, to inspire human beings to think and imagine the world and cosmos differently, to envision utopia. Yet as Plato relentlessly reminds us, the powerful appeal to sensual experience, in particular visuality is notably persuasive. Textual visuality is a highly effective, possibly dangerous tool to achieve any rhetorical goal. In addition, to seriously consider visual textuality as reader/audience response suggests, "the impact of the images has as much to do with the complex preferences and interests of the reader[/audience] as it does

with what the text demands."[382] In this following chapter, we will particularly explore aspects of the rhetoric force of our metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse including the persuasiveness as well as the power to incite utopian thought and action.

Metaphor as Rhetoric Tool

In the *Rhetoric,* Aristotle considers proper use of metaphors as a most important tool for the orator:

> It is metaphor above all that gives perspicuity [σαφής], pleasure [ἡδύς], and a foreign air [ξενικός], and it cannot be learnt from anyone else;[383]

Perspicuity or clarity of style of course is one of the major merits required in speeches in order to ensure communication. Yet the proper metaphor also should provide "pleasure" and "foreign air," a diversion from the ordinary to keep the interest of the audience. The metaphor, juxtaposing the contrary aspects of "perspicuity" and "foreign air," in a single figure of speech, enfolds a "storehouse" of possible references, perspectives and new insights likely to capture the interest of the audience. Good metaphors epitomize, what otherwise would require a lengthy discourse. Metaphorical language in the Apocalypse

[382] C. C. Rowland "The Book of Revelation; Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" in: L. E. Keck ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol. XII. 555.
[383] Aristot. *Rh.* 1405a. Trans. J. H. Freese, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1926) Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) The Perseus Project, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

fulfils the same function, providing perspicuity, pleasure and foreign air, and the text effectively captivates the attention of reader/audience.

Aristotle's remarks about the efficacy of good metaphors in speeches provide interesting observations regarding the persuasive quality of metaphor as figure of speech. Yet the concept of our extended narrative metaphor requires a more comprehensive context, in which the extended metaphor is considered as argumentative unit affecting the reader's imagination.

Models for Rhetorical Analysis

Although, long discredited as mere technique and skill, recently, rhetoric has received renewed attention. In particular, an awareness of a firmly established role of persuasive discourse in the practice and constitution of the human sciences has spurred interest in rhetorical analysis.[384] Among biblical scholars, deconstructive and constructive capabilities of rhetorical analysis are utilized to explore presuppositions and conceptual frameworks underlying interpretations. Additionally, commentators have become more sensitive to the vital role rhetorical techniques played in antiquity.[385] As a systematic academic discipline, rhetoric was a required subject for students in the Greco-Roman world. Rhetoric certainly functioned as an important aspect of civic life.

Whether directly through education or indirectly in a manner of common use, rhetorical practice undoubtedly influenced authors and the readers/audience

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[384] A profile of a post-modern 'recovery of rhetoric' among the human sciences is discussed in: R. H. Roberts; J. M. M. Good eds. *The Recovery of Rhetoric: Persuasive Discourse and Disciplinarity in the Human Sciences* (Charlottesville/London: University Press of Virginia 1993) esp. 1-21.
[385] See: P. Esler, *Galatians* 14-17.

of biblical literature as well. However, what kind of analysis is most effective for persuasive discourse is an ongoing debate. G. Kennedy, one of the most distinguished scholars on Greek and Roman rhetoric, has constructed a model for rhetorical analysis of the New Testament according to classical parameters of Greco-Roman theories of rhetoric.[386] However, since most texts do not deal with a typical civic speech act of antiquity, rhetorical categories used in Greco-Roman handbooks such as Aristotle's *Rhetorica* or Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* cannot simply be applied generally to analyse all forms of written rhetoric. Moreover, a 'formistic' approach that merely applies the classical categories and techniques to biblical texts has rightly been criticized as often ineffective and one-sided. Representative of this critique, which particularly pertains to the variability of apocalyptic language, is S. D. O'Leary's argument:

> Such formistic approaches to these texts [apocalyptic discourse] frequently lead to seemingly arbitrary classifications;...As a root metaphor for critical method, formism cannot account for variations in style, substance and situation. Critics guided by formistic assumptions will tend to ignore such variations as they develop categories that either exclude too much, or include too much, in proportion to the specificity of their definition." [387]

In particular, an extended metaphor such as our textual image of the city does not adequately fit classical categories of rhetorical theory modelled

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[386] G. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina 1984) 3-38.

[387] Accordingly, S. D. O'Leary calls for a "dramatistic and argumentative analysis guided by a root metaphor of contextualism." *Arguing the Apocalypse* 14.

according to public speech acts in antiquity. Yet rhetoric as "discourse of such a character that the audience, in thought and in action, is so engaged that it becomes mediator of change"[388] is the art of persuasion. Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias* actually defines rhetoric as "master of persuasion" (πειθοῦς δημιουργὸς).[389] In relation to the power of persuasiveness, the eloquence of the metaphor of the city in the Apocalypse demands an inquiry! The focus in this context will therefore be on the rhetorical strategy of persuasiveness of our metaphoric-network, analysed "as an argumentative unit affecting the reader's reasoning or the reader's imagination."[390] The goal is to identify modes of persuasion and investigate the argumentative dimension of our metaphor. An analysis of the argumentative dimension of the metaphor should provide insight regarding underlying premises. Since we are dealing with a metaphor, particular emphasis will also be given to the effects of the textualized visuality, which possibly provoke the audience or reader to critique the past and present and imagine future possibilities.

Power of Persuasiveness

Since antiquity, rhetoric, as a phenomenon with inter-subjective dialogical dimensions, has always been in danger of becoming perfectly formal

[388] L. F. Bitzer "The Rhetorical Situation" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 4.
[389] Plat. *Gorg. 453a* Trans. Eva Maria Räpple.
[390] W. Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" *CBQ* 49 (1987): 455.

technique, a technique that can provide the power for persuasion towards virtually any goal.[391] Investigating the rhetorical dimension of the metaphor of the city, we confront "unstated as well as stated assumptions"[392] in the text.

> The very notion of communication implies for us the possibility of its opposite non-communication-or its use to deceive or conceal. "Rhetoric" returns us to the moral issues of the discipline, to needs, aims and values connected with discourse.[393]

The seemingly never-ending series of fundamentalist interpretations of the book of Revelation certainly contributes urgency to the quest for values and goals concealed in rhetorical discourse. The question is: what premises and assumptions are "veiled" in rhetorical language? This should be answered as thoroughly as possible. Aristotle, dealing with the dangers of ornamental language, reminds us that rhetorical composition and style serve a theory of argumentation.

> The orator persuades by moral character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of confidence; for we feel confidence in a greater degree and more readily in persons of worth in regard to everything in general, but where there is no certainty and there is room for doubt, our confidence is absolute. But this confidence must be due to the speech itself, not to any preconceived idea of the speaker's character; for it is not the case, as some writers of rhetorical treatises lay down in their "Art," that

[391] One of the most famous deliberations about the "value" of rhetorical power is certainly Plato's *Phaedrus.*
[392] R. Cohen, "The Fictions of Rhetoric" in K. W. Thompson ed. *The History and Philosophy of Rhetoric and Political Discourse* vol. I (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America 1987) 97.
[393] Ibid. 97

> the worth of the orator in no way contributes to his powers of persuasion; on the contrary, moral character, so to say, constitutes the most effective means of proof. The orator persuades by means of his hearers, when they are roused to emotion by his speech; for the judgments we deliver are not the same when we are influenced by joy or sorrow, love or hate; and it is to this alone that, as we have said, the present-day writers of treatises endeavor to devote their attention. (We will discuss these matters in detail when we come to speak of the emotions.) Lastly, persuasion is produced by the speech itself, when we establish the true or apparently true from the means of persuasion applicable to each individual subject. [394]

To be able to recognize values and goals that are clothed in persuasive language as a mere mode of deceptive manipulation, Aristotle proposes three kinds of proof. He states persuasion for truth is accomplished first through the moral character of the speaker, and through the emotional quality of rhetoric. Aristotle's analysis deals with rhetorical speech. The moral character of the speaker, or in our context, the teller of the metaphor, necessarily surpasses the scope of this study. Likewise, while the "emotional quality" of the argument is of immense importance in persuasive discourse, we will not be able to fully encompass this dimension, especially the field of psychology. However, the third characteristic whereby the speech convinces an audience, that it appears "true or apparently true," provides a most interesting aspect for evaluation. The true or apparently true rarely encompasses the whole truth but usually reflects truth in some manner. It is somewhat truthful.[395] Aristotle's evaluation of the

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[394] Aristot. *Rh.* 1356a. Trans. J. H. Freese. Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

[395] Larry Arnhart in an analysis of Aristotle's philosophical use of common opinions concludes:

true or apparently true could certainly be applied to our model of metaphor. The fragment of the textual image, originating from past and "immediate-historical occurrence" that meets "a feast of possibilities,"[396] "perspicuity" that meets "foreign air,"[397] is also the metaphorical tension between the true or apparently true and the not yet of the whole truth. In that sense, the textual image of the city provides the true or apparently true in a fragmented manner, open towards evaluation and imagination. In other words, appearance in our metaphor, with its correlate reality is always concealed pre-appearance, open towards a horizon of the possible.

The focus here will be on the highly effective persuasiveness of metaphorical language in our text, which inspires expectant emotions and longing towards an active response in the context of present experience and traditional core values of Jewish Christian belief. The search will direct us towards presuppositions and premises proposed in our text. For a text deeply rooted in Jewish memory, the true or apparently true certainly incorporates core values of the historical community like God's creative power, the gift of freedom in the exodus experience or the bond of the covenant as past horizon of our textual image of the city. However, these are certainly not the only possible

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> A common opinion, therefore, is almost always dubious, because rarely it is simply true; it is usually distorted by prejudices and partial perspectives of men. Yet even if it is not simply true, neither is it simply nonsense. One can assume that in some manner it reflects the truth.

Aristotle on Political Reasoning: A Commentary on the "Rhetoric" (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University 1981) 32.

[396] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 219, 20.

[397] Aristot. *Rh.* 1405a. Trans. J. H. Freese. Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project,* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

assumptions in the text. It is the task of rhetorical analysis to reflect on the true or apparently true conveyed as image of the city.

Rhetorical Context

With the associative power of our metaphor to evoke visibility of past and present, the "historical field of experience" becomes apparent to the senses. Meaningful perspectives of the textual image therefore arise not only as an act of remembering traditional experiences, beliefs and values but are also supported through the imaginative power of reader or audience. Ultimately, the choice of imaginative interpretation of the metaphor can become reality only when metaphorical expression turns into living existence, whenever, for the reader or audience, the "lively expression is that which expresses existence alive."[398]

The fact that the idea of the city, as an act of metaphorical imagination, evolves in a context of changing presuppositions and assumptions about the destiny and purpose of humanity, means interpretation is significantly dependent on any given historic context. Shared human experiences, values, and ideas are observed and imagined sympathetically as part of historic experience, provoked by the metaphor. The mutual relation between a text, writer and the audience/reader, in any particular historic moment, invests the metaphor with primary historical referential fields. It also ultimately allows for socio-political reference of the textual image of the city. In the act of appropriation, the

[398] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* Trans. R. Czerny, K. McLaughlin, J. Costello. 43.

metaphor becomes an integral part of human experience. In other words, we are dealing with what Lloyd Bitzer has called the "rhetorical situation":

> a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situation, is in many instances necessary to the completion of situational activity, and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character. [399]

In the context of our metaphor of the city, the central question for the historical situation is the question of the possibly best/ideal city or in a Christian context, the city of God. This question provokes the textual image, a persuasive narrative metaphor that encompasses dimensions of historical past and present as critical guidance towards the possibility of a new ideal city/community. As provocative incentive, the ultimate goal is the active participation and activity to bring this possibility into reality. The interdependence between interpretation and historic context will be at the centre of this chapter, in which we will analyse important examples of the rhetorical power of our textual image of the city.

To analyse the rhetorical power in a comprehensive manner would certainly require a history of interpretation for our textual image of the city since the textual image not only applies to the original historical context. Considering the many different not to say sometimes bizarre and eccentric perspectives, this interesting task nevertheless must surpass the scope of this investigation. This reading will therefore necessarily be selective, but should offer some insight into the literary technique of persuasiveness and important rhetorical goals of our metaphor of the city.

6.1. Metaphorical Geography

> So old is the problem of what building should ultimately adhere to. For building not only satisfies the need for somewhere to live and so on, it certainly does not seek to be merely pleasing in other respects either... How closely architecture is connected with the respective social conditions, with the power that is to be displayed, with influence. And how immanently building as such is not merely a particularly superstructural, but a pictorial, and hence objective art. As such, however, it adheres, like all pictorial art, to the visible world, absorbs it, reshapes it in an experimental-substantial way. [400]

The textual visuality of architectural features in our metaphor comes as a surprise for the modern reader of the Apocalypse. We wonder about the purpose of these vivid "literary paintings" of valuable materials, huge measurements and detailed information about gates and walls. Through the centuries, much ink has been spilled on the debates about the measurements of the city or the series of valuable stones,[401] which decorate the foundations of the wall.[402] Our interest here will be on powerful visuality evoked through architectural descriptions in

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[399] L. F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation" 5.

[400] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 726.

[401] See e.g. Reader's extensive analysis of traditional material concerning a possible relevance of the stones in the Book of Revelation which nevertheless has to conclude:

> Die Untersuchung der Überlieferungsgeschichte der zwölf Edelsteine und der Deutungsversuche hat also fast durchweg nur Negatives ergeben...Der Apokalyptiker hat hier k e i n G e h e i m n i s versteckt, das der Leser nun zu enträtseln versuchen sollte.

W. W. Reader "Die Stadt in der Johannesapokalypse" 116-17.

[402] R. H. Mounce gives an overview on traditional interpretations regarding architectural features of the heavenly city. R. H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation.* 378-84.

the Apocalypse. We are concerned with the rhetorical significance of building materials and architectural features, an aspect intrinsically connected with the socio-historical context, but also with artistic visuality that opens space towards metaphorical images of human and divine geography. In Bloch's words, we are interested in the spatiality of our metaphor of the city, which as textualized image adheres "to the visible world, absorbs it, reshapes it in an experimental-substantial way" that is the dynamic process form spatial visuality to utopian vision.

Geography of Utopia

The metaphor of the city, as epitome encompassing immediate historical reference and future possibility, opens thought beyond the boundaries of time and space. Exploring geographical features in the context of rhetorical analysis brings about the question of utopian thought in any city design and the normative paradigmatic quality of a geography of utopia:

> The relevant question in utopian thought is that of the man-nature-God relation. That question is the utopian paradigm.... it is evident that the norm is a philosophy-a way of looking at life and the world. [403]

Certainly any portrayal of beautiful materials and magnificent architecture of a city serves to represent her majesty and power. Herodotus praises Babylon

[403] P.W. Porter, F. E. Lukermann, "The Geography of Utopia" in *Geographies of the Mind: essays in historical geosophy in honor of John Kirtland Wright* D. Lowenthal, M. J. Bowden eds. with assistance of M. A. Lamberty (New York: Oxford University 1976) 197-223 esp. 216-17.

as "famous and strongest" city.[404] He depicts an extraordinary wall system and towers, which encircle the royal palace and sacred shrines to emphasize elaborate architecture as sign for the extraordinary charisma of Babylon:

> These walls are the city's outer armor; within them there is another encircling wall, nearly as strong as the other, but narrower. In the middle of one division of the city stands the royal palace, surrounded by a high and strong wall; and in the middle of the other is still to this day the sacred enclosure of Zeus Belus, a square of four hundred and forty yards each way, with gates of bronze. In the center of this sacred enclosure a solid tower has been built, two hundred and twenty yards long and broad; a second tower rises from this and from it yet another, until at last there are eight. The way up them mounts spirally outside the height of the towers; about halfway up is a resting place, with seats for repose, where those who ascend sit down and rest. In the last tower there is a great shrine; and in it stands a great and well-covered couch, and a golden table nearby.[405]

The "armour" of the walls made by the hands of human beings, most impressively illustrate the mighty splendour and strength of this city. The royal palace is not only the dwelling of the king but also the seat of "Zeus Belus,"[406] a most potent god incorporating the qualities of two powerful deities. This sacred place, linking the world with the sphere of the gods, is located on a mountain. The towers of the city reaching towards the heavens are a poignant and visible manifestation of the power of human beings. The mythological story of the

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[404] Hdt. 1.178. Trans. A. D. Godley. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, February, 2000.
[405] Ibid. 1.181.1-5.
[406] Zeus Belus identifies the Asiatic god Bel (Baal) with the ruler over the Greek pantheon, Zeus.

tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9) has become a striking metaphor for the hypocrisy of human beings in their limitless desire for power and fame, doomed to fail. Yet whether Jerusalem, Rome, Athens or any other great city in antiquity, the powerful architecture is fascinating as a visible expression of the historical power of the city's inhabitants. Cities are still acclaimed for their prominent architecture. Architecture meant to last becomes a symbol for majesty, continuity and existence. In that sense, Babylon in our text is a lively paradigm for any worldly city created by human beings, cities that are built on technology, engineering[407] and economic production. The city, the great one, becomes the symbol for human beings who glorify themselves in their own deeds, using architecture seemingly to surpass the boundaries of time and space.

Human Geography

How differently is space defined for the heavenly city:

> And in the spirit he took me away on a great, exalted mountain, and showed me the city, the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, holding the glory of God: her brilliance resembling a most precious stone, like Jasper, bright as crystal having a great high, exalted wall, holding twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written on them, that are the names of the twelve tribes of the descendants of Israel, on the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates; and the wall of the city having twelve foundations, and upon them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Rev 21:10-14).

[407] In a modern world, engineering includes genetic, psychological, social, chemical, electrical and environmental issues.

In the heavenly Jerusalem, it is not the fame of human builders, kings, merchants or soldiers but the glory of God that is decisive. As the city descends from heaven, the New Jerusalem transcends human failure, incompleteness and most importantly the human hypocrisy to build the city unto heaven. Never can any worldly city exhibit the perfect measurements, the infinite size, the radiance and the splendour of most precious materials that characterize the heavenly city, which is God's glory (Rev 21:15-21). Yet the "visual dimension" of the holy, heavenly Jerusalem as Not-Yet-Possibility is already in the world. The "visible" cipher of worldly perfected architectural pre-appearance, as reference to a horizon of possibility in the metaphor, is the "coming down out of heaven."[408] It is humanity's infinite desire for power that creates Babylon. It is the humble human being before God and the Son of God who will become citizen in the city coming down from heaven.

As much as the architectural features are a manifestation of power in the worldly city, they are symbolizing power as well in the heavenly city. However, it is a fundamentally different power, the power of those who are humble before God and the Son of God. Rev 2:9 reads: "I know your distress and your life of a beggar - but you are rich -." Distress, moreover the life as a beggar, which means economic as well as social destitution, of course, are not praised for the misery of the communities. Rev 2:9 provides a striking metaphor for the

[408] Cf. Paul who contrasts the present Jerusalem (νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ) with the Jerusalem above (ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ) (Gal 4:25-6). Paul explicitly exploits the difference between the two cities to emphasize the new reality of the Christ event against a Judaizing opposition that focused on inheritance and promise symbolized in the heavenly city as prototype of the earthly city. See: A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet* 18-22.

community's human condition as reference to humility before God. Understanding distress (θλῖψις) and life as a beggar (πτωχεία) as reference to humility, the community in Smyrna is praised for virtuous

humility opposed to hubris and unlimited desire for power that characterizes the city of Babylon.[409] The outstanding architecture of the heavenly city is not an expression of human hypocrisy. The walls and open gates rather symbolize geography of solidarity with the inscriptions on the gates and foundations as reference for the constitutive leadership of this community. The inscriptions root the heavenly community in the paradigmatic leadership of the twelve sons of the Tribes of Israel (Rev 21:12) and the apostles of the Lamb (Rev 21:14). The foundation of the heavenly city is God's history with the people. The references to the beginnings of community between God and his people as well as the reference to people who are "rebuilt" by "the words of the First and the Ultimate who was dead and came back to life" (Rev 2:8) constitute Jewish Christian faith in God as the principle of its foundation. As testimonial to principal historical figures, it refers to important core values in our text. Architecture is used as paradigmatic expression for community: human beings who faithfully respond with their deeds to God's self-revelation in history. The metaphor inspires the vision of gates and walls as lively community.

As the home of God among human beings (Rev 21:3), the heavenly city

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[409] For an excellent discussion of the different traditions and nuances of meanings for πτωχεία see H. D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* A. Y. Collins ed. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress 1995) 110-119. Regarding the social stratification of Christian communities in Hellenistic cities of the Roman East see P. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology.* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 171-79.

offers a most provocative counter vision to any great city. The architecture in the heavenly city is thus not an expression of the visible manifestation of humanity's power of urban construction but a metaphor for the faithful community, the home of God, the Alpha and Omega among human beings. Architecture in the New Jerusalem refers to the gift of community, which embraces and transcends the diverse temporal fields of God's history with the people. The metaphor spurs imagination to dream of the renewed garden Eden, to envision human geography in the walls and gates. Metaphorical language evokes the image of community of God's people sustained by the "stream of water of life, sparkling like crystal, emerging from the throne of God and of the Lamb, into the middle of the wide road of her [the city]. On either side of the stream, a tree of life..." (Rev 22:1-2). The architectural mark for connection in any city, a wide road (πλατεῖα sc. ὁδὸς), bordered by the tree of life, makes visible the bond of life giving and healing power which arises from God and the Lamb in the heavenly city. Textually visualized is the gift of the beginning (Rev 1:8; 21:6) as fragmentary pre-appearance. It becomes an invitation for those "who conquer" (Rev 2:7 et al.) to envision its promised fulfilment, to build on the city of God (Rev 3:12) the bride of the Lamb (Rev 21:9). Architecture becomes human and divine geography!

Divine Geography

The most radical geographical metaphor appears in Rev 21:22:

> And I saw no temple in therein, for the Lord, God, the Almighty and the Lamb is her temple.

In Herodotus' description of Babylon, a sacred place, the temple of Zeus Belus, symbolizes the presence of the divine. The architecture of the temple as the dwelling place for a divine being holds great importance in most ancient cities representing the interconnected religious, political and economic power of the city. For Jews, the holy sanctuary was of cardinal concern throughout Israel's history with Yahweh. Deut 12:5 reads

> But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there.

According to 1 Kgs 6:11-13 the temple holds a central place in the theology of Israel:

> Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon, "Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel."

Besides its theological significance, the temple served as a social, economic and political institution, a centre for economic and social relations and for the exercise of power. Before its destruction in 70 C.E. the Jewish Temple created by Herod the Great was a most famous site, its sanctity and splendour, the great pride of the Jewish people.

Among the prophets, Ezekiel wrestles most strikingly with the role of the temple for the people of God. For Ezekiel the temple as House of YHWH

becomes the central vision for a new society, a temple that is not under the power of a human king. Kalinda Rose Stevenson, in an interesting study investigating territorial rhetoric in Ezekiel, calls attention to his implicit social critique:

> The function of the temple as mediator between the social and the cosmic, between the earthly and the heavenly, between the actual and the symbolic, makes the House of YHWH the focal point of the new society...For this Rhetor, imagining a world without a human king was radical; imagining a world without an actual temple would be impossible. In a world in which kings were temple builders, the Rhetor imagined a temple that was not the territory of a human king. [410]

Considering the tremendous religious and socio-economic importance of a sacred space like the temple in antiquity, the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem in the Apocalypse is stunning! The city of God has no temple! God is among the people! Sacred places can be deceiving; power can be the power of exploitation. Here the metaphor of the city opens a vision that strikes into the heart of traditional values and beliefs. It climactically intensifies Ezekiel's vision of the new city as house of YHWH. The critique of oppressive human power connected with the temple on earth, a critique that prompted Ezekiel to envision his new city as house of YHWH, is magnified dramatically in the city of God, a

[410] K. R. Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48* SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars 1996) 153. The focus in this study is on Ezekiel's vision of a new temple (Ezek 40-48) as a text that conveys social space and spatial theology by means of territorial rhetoric. Stevenson's analysis of the theme of territoriality, as an exploration of the social and religious function of spatial aspects in a biblical context, offers a much-needed additional perspective to traditional historical critical exegesis with its emphasis on temporality.

city without a temple. Solidarity among the faithful replaces social and economical relations, which are the sign of the temple bureaucracy. Solidarity also replaces the need for the gates to be closed to impede "outsiders" from entrance into the city:

> And her [the city's] gates will never be locked by day - and there will be no night there. And one will bring the glory and honor of the nations into her. But nothing profane shall enter her nor anyone performing desecration or lying, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev 21:25-26).

While the image of open gates surely suggests a city that welcomes everybody, Rev 21:27 proposes the exclusion of the ones who are not written in the book of life. The visionary possibility does not resolve the possibility of Nothingness in the text, as the tension between hope and desperation has not lost its relevance in the world. In other words, the vision of the heavenly city, where the gates will never be locked includes awareness of exclusion from the city as a real possibility.

There is another significance to the vision of the heavenly city. Architecture, in particular sacred architecture, symbolizing human and divine geography, may also deceive. The temple as metaphor for God and the Lamb unveils the dangerous persuasiveness of grandiose, famous architecture. Beautiful architecture readily lends itself to replace divine geography in the eyes of human beings. This is why John does not see a perfect magnificent building but the Alpha and Omega as essential source for the "living community" of the faithful in the city of God! This is why "anyone who conquers" will become a pillar in the temple of God (Rev 3:12) and participates in the heavenly

community. The strong emphasis on the temple is a radical vision of a new human geography as incentive for the communities on earth to create a new society (Rev 2:7 et al.).

Actuality

Our investigation into architectural features of the city brings to mind Aristotle's characteristic of metaphor: "that things are set before the eyes by words that signify actuality."[411] Certainly, the architectural marks, referring to essential characteristic signs of any city in antiquity, bring about an impressive visualization of our textual image. The walls, gates, the streets and river, the sanctuary refer to urban life. They particularly relate our metaphor to the great cities, which, through their prominent architecture demonstrate a powerful role in the world. "Set before the eyes" are not only the "visible" buildings, walls, streets and sanctuaries but also the whole power structure, including economic, and socio-cultural dominion of these cities, which finds its expression in architecture. It is here, in this visualized power structure of the worldly city, that a most potent new idea emerges in relation to the heavenly city in which architectural features are given a new referential quality, as reference for the community of God the Lamb and the people.

In reference to the traditional prominence of sanctuaries as dwelling place for a divine being, the "visualization" of the temple is evoked; yet its significance is reinterpreted in the book of Revelation. The metaphor allows the

[411] Aristot. Rh. 1411b. Trans. J. H. Freese, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1926) Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) The Perseus Project, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

reference to the essential reality behind the holy place, God. What is provoked through the visualization of city architecture is a process of thinking. In analogy to traditional geographic space, the architectural imagery of the heavenly city opens space for critical evaluation of historic reality. The audience or readers are confronted with different power structures hidden behind the visible world and persuaded towards a city which is constituted through the solidarity of human beings in community with God and the Lamb. The metaphorical use of architectural features opens perspectives that transcend the historical space of the city, referring towards a reality that embraces God's history with humanity.

6.2. The Metaphor of the Covenantal Bond

> Never closed: thus precisely the all too beautiful breaks into life when the varnish cracks. When the surface pales or darkens, as in the evening when the light falls obliquely and the mountains emerge. The shattering of the surface and furthermore of the merely cultural ideological context in which the works have stood exposes depth wherever it exists...Without such potency for the fragment, aesthetic imagination would of course have sufficient perception in the world, more than any other human apperception, but it would ultimately have no correlate. For the world itself, just as it is in a mess, is also in a state of unfinishedness and in experimental process out of that mess.[412]

[412] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 219, 221.

Aesthetic imagination inspired through our metaphor of the city as woman provides visuality of a fragmented world, a world in a state of unfinishedness. The cracked varnish realized as part of our image is the constant reminder that appearance is fragmentary just as the world is unfinished. The stimulus to see the woman differently, to think and imagine a new, a better community, is born from this consciousness. Sharpening awareness for varnish cracks in the image of the woman is part of our rhetoric analysis. The city as woman as exceptionally powerful metaphor, thoroughly anchored in the common experience of any human being, is of course an image deeply moving the emotions and actively engaging any audience or reader. Its persuasiveness could not be more effectively used as in our context, in which humanity and community become a powerful image of sexuality, love, and marriage. Here, efficacy to convey truth or ideology is equally potent. Awareness of the fragmentary in our image demands responsibility to shatter the "surface" and the "merely cultural ideological context."

Politics of the Body

The powerful rhetorical force of persuasion of the female image has come under strong feminist ideological critique in recent years.[413] Since any

[413] See esp. T. Pippin in her analysis of female images in the book of Revelation, which employs ideological critique of the themes of death and desire. She argues that the conflicting forms of desire in the text "the desire for death--the desire for desire--the death of female desire and the fulfilment of male desire" create a world in which women's roles are defined by men. Pippin's reading opens valuable insights into the rhetorical "dynamics" of desire regarding the images of women in the Apocalypse. She writes:

image can rhetorically be used to represent particular perspectives of certain groups to reinforce special interests, it is important to uncover the traditional rhetorical power structures associated with the image. Throughout the centuries, the metaphor of the city as woman has rarely failed to ascribe certain roles to women in political, social and religious life.

Kenneth Burke, discussing the use of persuasion for transcending social rupture, states:

> we can question whether any revolutionary *political* cause can possibly get its full expression unless corresponding variants of it in *sexual* terms are likewise developed.[414]

He supports his statement with the observation that political censorship correlates with sexual prohibitions in history. It will be worthwhile to reflect on this observation concerning our metaphor, which explicitly connects political and sexual life in the metaphor of the woman as the city. If it is true that political and sexual freedom correspond at least to a certain degree, what possible rhetorical impact has the image of the woman in the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem for a reader or audience in the first century? To encounter the

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> Women have always had a hard time with the figure of the prostitute in literature and life.... The ideology of gender in the text reveals the choice of women readers of the Apocalypse-to identify with the Bride or the Women clothed with the Sun, but not the Whore or the Jezebel. A materialist-feminist reading reveals these textual sexual strategies for dividing the woman symbol in the narrative.

T. Pippin, *Death and Desire* 59-60. Our focus in this chapter here will especially be on potential political perspectives of the metaphorical image of the city as women.

[414] K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California 1969) 209.

response of reader or audience in antiquity, we can only reach back to our known historical examples. Aristotle's definition of the city/state as extension of the household offers interesting perspectives for our topic:

> for every state is composed of households. Household management falls into departments corresponding to the parts of which the household in its turn is composed; and the household in its perfect form consists of slaves and freemen. The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slaves, husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships, I mean that of mastership, that of marriage (there is no exact term denoting the relationship uniting wife and husband), and thirdly the progenitive relationship (this too has not been designated by a special name). [415]

Aristotle articulates here what actually has become a pre-eminent model in the Mediterranean city-state, an important principle, which served as foundation for guaranteed rights and freedom of citizens. Yet as Marilyn B. Arthur observes, it also inscribes "secured liberty for all of its citizens by inventing a system of private property which required women to legitimate it and slaves to work it."[416] Aristotle conceives the different classes as the most effective system for the ordered life, a system in which the subservient role of women, children and slaves is effectively endorsed through the social structure of the city/state.[417]

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[415] Aristot. *Pol.* 1253b.Trans. H. Rackham. Available [Online] Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project*, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.
[416] M. B. Arthur "Origins of the Western Attitudes Toward Women" *Arethusa* 6.1. (1973): 37.
[417] Ibd. esp. 31-37. See here for further literature.

> Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. [418]

The city-state with the household as fundamental unit is essentially a hierarchical model in which slaves, women and children are subordinated to the power of free men and husbands. This definition of the household as smallest fundamental entity of the city/state summons a model for the structure of society that has not only been influential for the Greco-Roman world but throughout the centuries until today. It further has been the principal model for the community of the church. As prominent model, it was most likely on the mind of many readers/audience of the Apocalypse. The images of the women in the Apocalypse as well as the image of the king all too well lend themselves to associative identification with the hierarchical structure of patriarchal power and female subordination in the city/state.

Although the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem does not offer practical outlines for the political city/state, the image of the king certainly suggests a practical paradigm for hierarchical structure. It is interesting that the author of the Apocalypse uses the word 'king' very sparingly (Rev 15:3; 17:4; 19:16). For the vision of the New Jerusalem, God and the Lamb's kingship are frequently expressed through the image of the throne (e.g. Rev 21:5). The author was probably very well aware of the dangers and blessings connected with royal leadership, which is reflected in the word plays regarding the royal title.

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[418]Aristot. *Pol.* 1260a. Trans. H. Rackham. Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) The Perseus Project, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

The negative image of the self-proclaimed queen, the image of a woman in relation with the beast, of course looms largely in the text. The woman Jezebel, who is also associated with the false claim for leadership, is ultimately denied the authority over the nations, which is given to "anyone who conquers" (see Rev 2:20-26). While the Lamb, as the Son of God, who brings about a rule of peace in the heavenly city, is a male figure, most elaborately characterized female images in the Apocalypse, Jezebel and the harlot, essentially incorporate the failure to rule. Their reign is characterized by death (Rev 2:23; 18:8), mourning and famine (Rev 18:8) blood and fire (Rev 18:8; 24). The final defeat of the self-acclaimed queen, Babylon ultimately inaugurates the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem, symbolically referred to as the marriage between the bride and the Lamb (Rev 19:5-10). As poignant images, Jezebel and the harlot represent the dishonourable claim for religious and political leadership, a claim that is denied to them in the text and not in the text alone!

Virtuous Woman

Although the positive female in our metaphor, the image of the bride is barely characterized, the bride of the Lamb suggests a certain role for women in society as well. In an interesting study, Karen J. Torjesen[419] demonstrates that for women in the Greco-Roman world, the virtues of modesty, piety, childbearing and loving dedication to their husband describe an honourable status.[420] To maintain these values, a respectable woman was not supposed to

[419] K. J. Torjesen, "In Praise of Nobel Women: Gender and Honor in Ascetic Texts" *Semeia* 57 (1992): 41-64.

[420] As much as I do agree with T. Pippin that the female images in the Apocalypse accentuate the female role in the city as subordinate to male power,

draw any attention to herself, to restrain from enticement. Justice, courage, and temperance were considered virtues characterizing honourable males in their public appearances. These virtues characterized them as especially suited for the public life in the city-state in antiquity.[421] In contrast, the image of the bride (Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17) certainly embodies the virtues of a respectable woman. As bride she is made beautiful for her husband (Rev 21:2), and as wife she is privileged to wear the fine, pure linen that is the sign of the righteous acts of the holy people (Rev 19:7-8). In a world of very high infant mortality, it was one of her most important duties to ensure the survival of the household through procreation, most prominently the birth of a male heir. Rev 12:1-6 indirectly portrays the vivid imagery of the physical agonies and dangers of childbirth that concludes in the creation of a child. The virtues of an honourable woman are engraved into the female image of the bride (Rev 21:2, 9; 22:17), the woman (Rev 19:7) and the mother (Rev 12:1-6).

The evocative power of these female virtues strongly ascribes to women the domain in the private sphere of the house. This honourable female status attributes a role to any woman that excludes her from the public domain,

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I do not think we can go as far as to say, that "women are not included into the utopian city." T. Pippin, "The Reproduction of Power: Feminism, Marxism, and the Ideology of Reading" 3. The New Jerusalem as the bride, despite modern feminist critique, most certainly was an honourable symbol, at least for the original reader/audience in antiquity. The problem is, that in Pippin's reading the metaphor is restricted to a modern perspective and lost is the possible vision of a heavenly community that is humanity.

[421] It is clear that we are only sketching principal dispositions in the Greco-Roman world. Aristocratic women especially are known to have stepped beyond these boundaries. However, these women were critiqued; Tacitus e.g. states that the emperor Tiberius reacted strongly against honours attributed to his mother, Livia: "he was anxious with jealousy and regarded the elevation of a woman as degradation of himself" *Ann. I.14.* Trans. Eva Maria Räpple.

thus from influencing political power. The exclusion from public influence is further supported through the image of the deceitful women in our text, the harlot Babylon as well as the prophetess Jezebel. Both women are most significantly set apart from the characteristics of the virtuous woman. The harlot, Babylon, is called "mother of harlots and of earth's abominations" (Rev 17:5) which stigmatises her as the personification of evil in the world. In contrast to the pure garment of the bride, her clothing is meant to seduce, as she is "clothed in purple, and scarlet, and covered with gold, jewellery, and priceless stone, and pearls" (Rev 17:4 also 18:16). Her self-glorification and luxurious life (Rev 18:7) certainly are not signs of her modesty. Her sacrilegious meals disregard any form of piety and reference for the sacred (Rev 17:6). However, the evil woman's most nefarious deeds are her sexual transgressions. Jezebel and Babylon are both accused of practicing immorality (Rev 2:21, 17:2 et al.). Babylon uses her sexuality to seduce the powerful on earth, the kings and merchants (Rev 18:3). The image of a woman, the city Babylon, incorporates climactic evil and vices in this world as "a home for evil spirits, and a prison for every unclean spirit, and a prison for every unclean bird, and a prison for every unclean and hated beast" (Rev 18:2).

Inasmuch as the negative image of the harlot looms dominantly in our text, the question is, what are the implications of a prominent image that identifies female not male characteristics with evil in the world? From our analysis of female virtues in antiquity, we can delineate characteristics that reflect common values while at the same time ascribe to the woman the domain of the private sphere of the house. The persuasiveness of the image seems to be even more convincing in Rome where the population of prostitutes was not

allowed to enter legitimate marriages and exercise citizenship.[422] In our text, the harlot as evil woman is taking over public life, thus, violating the private domain of any honourable women. Her passionate longing and fornication with the powerful on earth (Rev 18:3) most likely was interpreted as her female aspiration to gain public power. Therefore, might not the reader or audiences have drawn the conclusion that women are not apt to rule in the heavenly community? Alternatively, from a different perspective, does our text not reflect the same implicit power structure that Aristotle summons so persuasively in his *Politics*?

Imagination as Liberating Possibility

The metaphor of the city as the woman invites to further thought, referring to a framework of premises rooted in Jewish-Christian belief. It is a call for the reader/audience to fill this vision with practical consequences here and now. As with any reader/audience response, this imaginative answer will be conditioned through the socio-historical circumstances of the audience and reader, a response that throughout the centuries has contributed to interpretations of the image of the harlot, which enforce burdensome perspectives of a patriarchal culture. The "imprint," the provocative and emotionally moving

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> Female citizens who prostituted themselves lost status and were not allowed to wear the robe of the matrona. The same was true of adulterous wives and concubines and freed female slaves who married their masters but separated without the master's approval. The disreputable were permanently deprived of the right to enter into legitimate marriage and transmit full citizenship. A similar category existed in Greek regions, but we know less about it.

A. Rousselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome" in P. Schmitt Pantel ed. Trans. A. Goldhammer *A History of Women: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University 1992) 319.

image of the harlot which the text has left, cannot be eradicated. However, should not the critique of this image enable us today to read it differently, to uproot its possible oppressive persuasiveness and think more about the metaphorical power to open perspectives, probably perspectives of liberation?

Lorraine Code, contemplating the correlation between experience, knowledge and responsibility, emphasizes the importance of integrating responsible reflection on female experience to offer new perspectives on traditional formalistic and abstract theoretical structures.

> What has been labeled or created by human beings out of contingent circumstances can likewise be labeled and understood differently by them, or altered when its flaws are revealed. Suspending such artificial constructs may reveal other possibilities, perhaps more creative ones, just as reading traditional texts, theories and presuppositions against the grain may reveal other perspectives on seemingly entrenched ideas.[423]

Metaphor, as incentive to seek new perspectives, invites us to look for differing interpretations, to include responsible reflection upon experience and possibly, to let it reshape traditional interpretations and theories. I therefore do not think we need to say that the "Apocalypse leaves women with no option for the future; the future is predetermined by God."[424] The Apocalypse with its textual images forces us constantly to take on the responsibility of seeking the true or seemingly true in our interpretation. This might very well include critique of ideology and reinterpretation of traditionally valued, common sense

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[423] L. Code, "Experience, Knowledge, and Responsibility" in eds. M. Griffiths and M. Whitford *Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy* (Bloomington/ Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1988) 187-204 esp. 189.
[424] T. Pippin, *Death and Desire* 107.

reasoning. The future of women is also determined by responsible interpretive work, creativity and imagination!

Sexuality particularly marks the self in relation to the other and the other in relation to the self. Sexuality, especially in the biblical tradition, has always been an essential metaphor that refers to humanity centred in a relation between God and human beings as well as human beings among each other. Instead of being reduced to procreation,[425] it is a most vivid image of creation, thus encompasses creativity, change, and ideally involves personal love, solidarity, reception and participation. It marks a new beginning, a bond in which individuals join each other to form a new community. The New Jerusalem as the bride thus becomes a vital metaphor for the new creation, the new community, a metaphor that utilizes the bond of personal relationship between human beings to open imaginative space that reaches towards the horizon of fulfilment of life in community of human beings, a community that is the home of God among the people. It is the New Jerusalem, the new city, God among human beings that is prepared as the bride (Rev 21:2). The new reality is poignantly described in the words:

> And I saw the city, the holy one, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride made beautiful for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "look, the home of God is among human beings, he will live with them and they will be his people and he himself, God, will be with them as their God. And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not be any more,

[425] Motherhood thus is different from procreation, which limits the meaning of female sexuality to guaranteeing the livelihood of a male society.

moreover no mourning, nor crying nor pain will be there any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev 21:2-4).

The metaphor of the city as bride of the Lamb uses husband-wife imagery to convey the bond of relationship between the one to the other as metaphor for the community in relation to God. Shared life, the marriage bond, is thus metaphorically extended to the web of human relations as constitutive for the living and acting together of the community/city/state, a relation that essentially is rooted in God's love towards the people. Personal love, as life-giving force, becomes the symbolic foundation for the living together of this community. This means that the new community is built on covenant relation, which finds its explicit definition in the Golden Rule: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself "(Luke 10:27).

That this love, directed towards the other, essentially means the sharing of suffering and pain, of life's fragility and, ultimately, mortality as well as sharing the pleasure of the mutual, creative relationship, could hardly be pictured more vividly as in the metaphor of the marriage between the bride and the Lamb. If the Lamb is referring to human defencelessness and humiliation unto death for others as reference to the Paschal Lamb of the new covenant (e.g. Rev 5:6; 13:8), the bride opens perspectives of joyfulness and fulfilment of the relation. The Lamb and the bride, as metaphorical references, thus embrace the whole range of human experiences of love, love, which includes the reference to mutual relationship as mystery of love, love that refers to the one who is love, God. It is here, that the mutual relationship transcends the worldly reality of

Babylon. The mystery of love, pictured as the shared life between the Lamb and the bride, metaphorically enables the readers/audience to imagine the home of God among human beings (Rev 21:3). The metaphor thus refers towards the mystery of a new humanity, which, from a human perspective, cannot possibly be reckoned in its totality in this world. Yet the marriage metaphor serves as invitation to imagine the possibility of a new humanity.

Our text does not allow us to remain in the realm of personal relation but suggests the extension towards the community of human beings. It therefore incorporates the question of a just relation with the plurality of others, including the anonymous, the "non-person," the poor, the slave. The question of justice thus essentially becomes the question of the distribution of power in community/city or state whether this power to act is of non-hierarchical and non-instrumental or hierarchical and instrumental character. The marriage metaphor calls the human being into responsibility for the plurality of others in the community as fulfilment of God's covenant.[426] As covenant of love, this includes the fidelity towards the other in one's own person, a community rooted in solidarity, availability, commitment and response towards the other. The metaphor of the Lamb and the bride most vividly refer to the mystery of love,

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[426] Martin Buber in a brilliant reflection on this sharing of life reflects on the self summoned to responsibility in relation to the other as answer to God's word:

> Die Ehe, als wesentlich verstanden, bringt einen in ein wesentliches Verhältnis zur "Welt", genauer: zum öffentlichen Wesen, - zu seiner Ungestalt und seiner Gestalt, zu seinem Unheil und seinem Heil....Wer "eine Ehe eingegangen ist," wer in die Ehe eingegangen ist, hat in der Intention des sacramentum damit Ernst gemacht, daß der Andere *ist:* daß ich am Seienden nicht rechtmäßig teilnehmen kann, ohne am Sein des Anderen teilzunehmen; daß ich auf die lebenslange Anrede Gottes an mich nicht antworten kann ohne für den Anderen mitzuverantworten; daß ich mich nicht verantworten kann ohne den Anderen mit zu verantworten, als der mir anvertraut ist.

M. Buber, *Das Dialogische Prinzip* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider 1984) 232.

which does not allow for the oppression or exploitation of the other but means sharing life as a whole. As community rooted in God's covenant, this community really means the solidarity of love in which tears, pain, crying, death, and mourning will be gone forever (Rev 21:4).

Critical Incentive

A vital critical incentive to imagine this new community arises from the harlot Babylon as reference to the status of the world as denial of future possibility. The community rooted in the rule of dominance, Babylon, as metaphorical exploration of the possibilities of human relationships based on exploitation and oppression, is a provocation to imagine a different possible community. Acid irony appears in the dirge about the destruction of Babylon (Rev 18:1-19) describing a community that is ruled by economical and political advantage, a community that has lost its bond with the creator God enrages the reader/audience. The devaluation of human beings as wares for sale (Rev 18:13), as instruments to gain wealth and ultimately power even if this includes the relation to the beast (Rev 17:3), is an affront against God's covenant with the people. Sexuality in the image of the harlot, as image of perverted power, as dominance of few over the many is a stimulus to imagine and search for a different community. Babylon, reality of perverted communal power needs to be destroyed before the New Jerusalem can become reality. In the loving covenant between God and his people there is no place for slaves, deprived of their human dignity as valuable goods, there is no place for any kind of economical, religious or political oppression.

Considering marriage as metaphor for the bond of love, that brings about the new city, is it not time to rediscover the sexual bond of marriage as a positive creative metaphor for the communal bond between human beings among each other and God instead of manifest expression of the historical role of women in society? As metaphor, it gives "rise to thought" for a community where men and women can realize and bring in their own personality, their own experiences, analogously referring to a social-political dimension that transcends traditional structures of power and subordination. This essentially includes sexuality, which arises as positive creative incentive particularly as critique of the contrasting image, the harlot. Considering Burke's statement which links sexual terms and revolutionary political language,[427] should we therefore not focus our interpretation of the metaphor of the city today on the revolutionary dynamic movement from the harlot to the bride as image of liberation for the person as a whole including all possibilities of "being"? If we begin to conceive the bride, including her sexuality, as affirmative image for creativity, solidarity, change and personal responsibility towards the other, as mutual love, would not this dynamic also become an invitation to rethink traditional social, religious and political ties to imagine a community rooted in solidarity instead of subordination and instrumental dominance?

The city as woman opens imaginative space for a relationship that in all similarity is always different from the worldly characteristics of any loving relationship among humans. It transcends male and female sexuality, political relevance and transcends any kind of social, religious, political structures that

[427] K. Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* 209.

characterize the worldly marriage, the worldly community/city/state. It carries the reader towards the limits of whatever can be said via language. The vision of "the city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev 21:10) is meant as an incentive to any reader/listener who is willing to participate in what Ricoeur calls the "unending work of interpretation applied to action and to oneself."[428] It is here, that the reader/audience is called into responsibility to search for the truth behind the persuasive force of the metaphor. Our metaphor opens new perspectives towards the New Jerusalem. It does not present us with the status quo but is a commission to search for the realization of this new reality to take on our own responsibility, rooted in the love between God and human beings.

6.3. The Politics of Ideology and Vision

> Utopia, in its concrete form, is the tested will towards the being of the All; the pathos of Being is therefore now at work in it which was previously devoted to a supposedly already completely founded, successfully existing world order, even supernatural world order. But this pathos acts as one of Not-Yet-Being and of hope for the summum bonum within it; and: despite all use of the Nothing in which history still continues, it
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> does not in fact ignore the danger of annihilation, even the still hypothetically possible

[428] P. Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* Trans. K. Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago 1992) 179.

Definitivum of a Nothing. Here it depends on the work of militant optimism.[429]

Existing world order, visible as the woman Babylon is unmasked as the use of the Nothing in history in the desperate longing for the Not-Yet of the heavenly Jerusalem. Militant optimism is at work in the unveiling of the reality Babylon, in the revelation of a dystopia previously apparent as glorious jubilation and magnificent power. Conscious realization of failed utopia feeds pathos and hope for the heavenly city, hunger for the city of God. The rhetoric of the metaphor of the city in Apocalypse forces the reader/audience to face the Definitivum of All, the heavenly Jerusalem, or the Definitivum of Nothing, Babylon, which will not exist any more (Rev 18:21-24). Rhetorically, the persuasive dynamism from a nightmarish dystopia, Babylon, towards the vision of the city of God demands critical realization that the urgent moment of existence cannot be wasted any longer in vain in the Babylonian failed attempts at utopia. It is here, at the enormously intensified consciousness of Nothing that hope can emerge, that the hunger is realized, which bears the strength to change worldly reality envisioning heavenly possibility. Babylon and the heavenly city in this context are rhetorically persuasive images, which heighten awareness for the danger of ideology lurking behind failed utopias thus inciting the pathos for imaginative vision.

[429] E. Bloch *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 312.

Critical Evaluation

In this context we will approach the motivational dynamic of our metaphor through an investigation into the function of ideological and utopian thought under the conceptual framework of "political imagination."[430] Ricoeur analyses the polarity between ideology and utopia as fulfilling complementary roles in a symbolic system of political imagination. While utopia functions as a radical rethinking of an alternative society and its topographical configuration, ideology strengthens the belief in the legitimacy of a system of authority. Ricoeur concludes:

> If it is true that ideologies tend to bridge the credibility gap of every system of authority and eventually to dissimulate it, could we not say that it is one of the functions of utopia, if not its main function, to reveal the undeclared overvalue and in that way to unmask the pretense proper to every system of legitimacy? In other words, utopias always imply alternative ways of using power, whether in family, political, economic or religious life, and in that way they call established systems of power into question. [431]

Ideology, in that sense, is the mask covering failed realizations of utopian thought, which can only be consciously realized as such through alternative thought, a new vision. In other words, we will understand the polarity between the cities of Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem in our metaphor under these aspects of ideology and utopia/vision as a "correlated interplay" of two fundamental rhetorical modes of political imagination.

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[430] P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson. 308-24.
[431] Ibid. 320-21.

Ideology of Power

Throughout our analysis, the metaphor of the city has confronted us with the question of proper and false legitimacy of power and authority. With effective persuasiveness, the mythological figure of the beast provides a vivid depiction of utterly perverted power in the Apocalypse. The beast supports (βαστάζω) the woman, the city Babylon (Rev 17:7), an image that inspired many artistic compositions. Lucas Cranach's drawing of the whore [2] and the harlot riding the beast [5] in the Douce Apocalypse are two examples for the evocative force of a loquacious image. Early on, the symbolic image of the beast has been interpreted as depiction of imperial power in historical contexts. For the original audience imperial power in Rome surely was a primary associative reference. Yet Lucas Cranach's drawing [2] is graphic evidence that the original historical context has not at all been the only rhetorical application of the image! The metaphor of the woman as city supported by the beast offers a visualization of power-relations in the city that has not lost its critical signal throughout history. The beast as important source for Babylon's abuse of power unveils a most pressing topic for community/city: What kind of authority serves the city of God, a community, where there are no more tears, pain or death? The beast, supporting Babylon, is a furious reminder that any chance to exercise power rarely fails to lure human beings into the practice of unjust power. The prominent motif of the harlot riding the beast portrays powerful and seductive relations that are responsible for the destruction of community. In the language of the Apocalypse, power cannot be perverted power in the hands of the beast, the woman, and kings (Rev 13:2; 17:14); ultimate authority is the power of God!

Yet the harlot's claim for power does not exclusively rest on her relation with the beast. The woman's wealth and splendour, which is as well the wealth and splendour of her people in the city, plays a vital role in the destruction of Babylon. A most startling passage in this context is

Rev 17:6b-7:

> And seeing her I wondered with great admiration. But the angel said to me: "Why do you wonder with great admiration? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and the beast that supports her, and that holds seven heads and ten horns."

The angel's explanation of the mystery of the woman reveals Babylon's claim for authority and human order, which is not manifest but distorted through the woman's fascinating appearance. Even the prophet wonders greatly (Rev 17:6). What needs to be unmasked is a system of illegitimate power. From the perspective of social imagination, the angel unveils conceptions that "justify" an unjustified a system of authority. Visible beauty of the harlot Babylon promises an alluring community/city, a utopian place that turns into horrific dystopia in the revelations of the angel. Babylon's reality as system of domination wears the ideological mask of beautiful appearance.

Very often, oppressive power is concealed behind glamorous appearance. It is the mask unjust power wears, which actually makes it most dangerous. Commentators on the Apocalypse like Allan A. Boesak, who emphasize the liberating power of the book of Revelation, do not appreciate the reference to dangerous deception clothed in glamorous appearance.

> There are some who connect John's astonishment to the wealth of the city. I cannot accept that. Oppressed people do not look in admiration on the riches of the oppressor when they know that those riches are the result of their own continued exploitation. [432]

Yet astonishment at the city arises from the fact that people do not always comprehend their own state of being oppressed and exploited. This is exactly why the mystery of the woman has to be unveiled because ideology enshrouds Babylon's illegitimate authority in highly desired beautiful appearance. The moment human beings are able to recognize Babylon's real identity is already the first step towards liberation from that ideology. The moment when admiration for the ideology fades, critical awareness prepares the energy for an exploration of new possibilities and ultimately for change.

Lament over Ideology

Lost Forever

The ideology of the city could not be unveiled more drastically as in the dirge over the destruction of Babylon. The ones who lament are the powerful who have profited most from the splendour of the city: the kings, the merchants and seafarers. They weep and mourn because no one buys the most precious cargo from them any more. The list of valuables that are lost holds most magnificent goods, which the city's soul desires. The text Rev 18:14 reads: "yet the fruit of your passionate longing of your soul has gone from you (καὶ ἡ ὀπώρα σου τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπῆλθεν ἀπὸ σοῦ). Who else could be referred to with Babylon's passionate longing of her soul than the desire of

[432] A. Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from South African*

Babylon's inhabitants? The text, in quite ironical hyperbole stigmatises the city's dependency on her wealth and splendour, which directs her to insensibility against the ones who are not able to be part of that magnificent life. It is desire going astray that considers slaves (Rev 18:13), as part of desirable goods, not human beings. To consider slaves as property was quite common in Antiquity. Aristotle states:

> so also the manager of a household must have his tools, and of tools some are lifeless and others living.....so also an article of property is a tool for the purpose of life, and property generally is a collection of tools, and a slave is a live article of property. [433]

Although Aristotle's theory of 'natural slavery' does not reflect the only opinion in antiquity,[434] the majority of Greeks and Romans still took it for granted that they were superior to 'barbarians'. The inhabitants of the city desire slaves, human beings, as merchandise to be acquired. The disregard for slaves could not be pictured more drastically. The list of valuable goods in the Apocalypse makes the powerful arrogance of a community visible, a community unable to recognize the human being created in the image of God in the face of a slave.

Wealth and beauty are persuasive masks disguising the real identity of Babylon, which destroys community as mutual relation among its members. The ideology of the city Babylon serves wealth, splendour and power instead of human beings. This city is Sodom and Egypt (Rev 11:8), a city where human

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Perspective 111.

[433] Aristot. *Pol.* 1253b. Trans. H. Rackham. Available [Online]: Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project*, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

[434] See e.g. *Epistles 47*. Seneca gives the advice that slaves should be treated as human beings and humble friends.

beings are used as merchandise. A community that uses human beings for exploitation cannot be a city of love. It is desire going astray which is the fornication of the city/community with the merchants and the kings and seafarers:

> the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her delicacy (Rev 18:3).

Textual visuality evokes the image of a city in which human beings are merchandise. The memory of Israel's past experiences resonates with Babylon's inhumanity. Awakened is the remembrance of Israel's crucial experience during the Babylonian exile. A city emerges, which dominates other nations through her power, a city that glorifies herself (Rev 18:7-8 see Isa 47:8) a city of impressive wealth! The lament combines the reminiscences of powerful suppression (Babylon) with images of immense wealth (Rev 18:9-20). Beauty of the city Babylon only veils her injustice and wealth that result from exploitation. The ironical presentation of Babylon's splendour and powerful relations allows the unmasking of economical, social, and political practices that violate God's standards. The hyperbaton "bodies namely human souls" Rev 18:14 surely contrasts with the status of slaves, who were considered property of their human masters. The satirical lament of the merchants and traders who loose their command over human beings is de facto acid critique against enslavement of the followers of the Lamb who are servants, οἱ δοῦλοι to God only (Rev 22:3, 6 see Lev 25:55).

The ideology of splendour and beauty is of such eminent importance because it offers an apparent legitimacy for authority and power, an ideology, in which wealth and splendour serve the powerful in the community instead of all human beings. In Babylon, a seemingly ideal community/city has turned into dystopia where the ones who occupy dominion, the kings, the seafarers and the merchants try to keep the status quo. They are concerned about the loss of privileges. Here, we find an important reason for their mourning: with the destruction of Babylon's fascinating appearance an ideology is also destroyed that legitimises their own interests!

The awareness of the dystopian reality bears the possibility of militant optimism. The moment critique against the Babylonian ideology is realized, hunger is evoked for a new society, utopia. In that sense, the metaphor of the city provides a fragmentary image unveiling ideology and opening new horizons of possibilities for new society. Babylon's insufficiencies, which raise fundamental questions for a new society, stir up longing for a community/city without injustice and oppression. Conscious realization of utopian failure paves the way to envisioning precious building materials of the holy city, a place more beautiful than Babylon (e.g. Rev 21:11-21), where wealth is not used as mask, not used to enhance the splendour of the few while others are left out. Beauty in the city of God metaphorically holds the promise of the Not-Yet to come into Being.

The Power of Solidarity and Love

Rhetorically, the argumentative dynamics of political imagination regarding the metaphor of the city move from the city Babylon towards the

heavenly city. The city Babylon, in an ironical play that captures her fascination as well as her offence against the community of God's people, is unmasked as dystopia. It is the awareness of failed attempts at utopia that becomes an incentive for the search of an alternative society, the city of God. The metaphor of the city with its rhetorical dynamics from Babylon towards the heavenly city is thus a motivation to imagine a new city, to think more about an alternative society that does not become a system of oppression. It is most importantly an incentive for the search for alternative ways of using power, power that is a central question in any society. Ricoeur reflects about utopia as incentive for a new attempt to actualise power:

> That the problematic of power is the kernel problem of every utopia is confirmed not only by the description of social and political fantasies of literary kind but also by examination of the various attempts to actualize utopias. The prose of the utopian genre does not exhaust the utopian mode or utopian spirit. There are (partially) realized utopias. These are, it is true microsocieties, some more permanent than others, ranging from the monastery to kibbutz or commune. But they are utopian in the sense that they constitute kinds of miniature laboratories or miniature experiments for broader projects involving the whole of society.[435]

The praxis of power is certainly at the centre of our metaphorical image of the city. It is actually a scandalous conversion of power that is proposed for the new society, since the powerless are chosen to represent authority: the Lamb, the oppressed and poor (Rev 2:9), the ones who carry burden and endure patiently (Rev 2:2, 19), the ones who love and serve others (Rev 2:19) and the ones who

are killed for their faith (Rev 2:13). Certainly not advocated here is the vision of a city where material, physical and emotional burdens "rule" the people. Otherwise, the heavenly city could not be a place without tears, mourning, pain and death! It would not be a city where the thirsty drink from "the spring of water of life gratis" (Rev 21:6) and where the tree of life heals the nations (Rev 22:2)! Gustavo Gutierrez thus portrays poverty as sign for humility before God as essential foundation for a community of solidarity:

> Christian poverty has meaning only as commitment of solidarity with the poor, with those who suffer misery and injustice. The commitment is to witness to the evil, which has resulted from sin and is a breach of communion. It is not a question of idealizing poverty, but rather taking it on as it is-an evil-to protest against it and to struggle to abolish it.[436]

The apparently powerless rather represent a different attitude towards power. Their power is based on their humility and openness before God and the Lamb. It is power that does not accept the vilifying dehumanising conditions, which are not only burdensome for human beings but offend God as well. This power rests in God who has created human beings in his own image (Gen 1:26), who has liberated the people from slavery (Exod 22:21-23; 23:9; Deut 10:19; Lev 19:34), God who has given his Son, the Lamb as option for liberation and justice. The new city thus emerges through the power of love, the power of service and of those who are rich at heart instead of material good. The new city is rooted in

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[435] P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson.
[436] G. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation, History, Politics and Salvation* Trans. and eds. C. Inda and J. Eagleson (Maryknoll: Orbis 1973) 300.

the power of God, who breaks down the structures of history to open a window on this new society, to initiate the reality of solidarity among the inhabitants, the dwelling of God among humanity, the presence of God among the people (Rev 21:3). God's own paradigm of humility serves as inspiring and creative incentive to built on this society of solidarity. This vision of authority based on humility and love results in a new concept of power among the citizens. As long as Babylon exists, as long as the breach between rich and poor, between powerful and powerless resides, social classes and hierarchical structures will characterize any city/state. Only by the virtues of humility and love can power over others be transformed into solidarity among the inhabitants of the city.

Born from the conscious realization of the powerful dystopian city Babylon is the determined search for the heavenly city. Evoked is a process of "constant reconstruction of the horizon of expectations - the past is forever being drawn into the present, and in new forms successfully protests against the decayed rigidity of dead structures."[437] The dialectic between reality, ideology and vision in our metaphor of the city, heightening awareness of oppressive structures, thus inspires the hope for solidarity. The motivational dynamics from Babylon towards the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem thus foster imagination and thought concerning the realization of a community rooted in the foundations of solidarity. Yet this vision of the new city is always the Not-Yet and bears the mark of utopia, which is task not arrival. The danger is that those who envision the city of God succeed in bringing about Babylon, that utopian vision is turned into dystopian society. Utopian vision of the city of God thus always demands

[437] D. Jasper, *The Study of Literature and Religion: An Introduction* 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1992) 71.

dissatisfaction with the Not, facing the open alternative between absolute Nothingness and the absolute All. Only as metaphorical imagination does textual visuality of the city allow for the dialectic towards the All itself.

6.4. Conclusion

Our task in this chapter was to investigate the inter-subjective, dialogical dimension of our metaphor, its rhetorical quality. We focused our attention on rhetoric that is not reduced to the persuasive power of bringing language alive but seeks the true or apparently true. This has confronted us with the possibility of concealed use of "unstated as well as stated assumptions" of the text, premises and presuppositions of our text.

An analysis of "unstated as well as stated assumptions" is particularly important because metaphorical language can stimulate imagination in order to see new "horizons of meaning". In that sense metaphors initiate dynamic processes of interpretation, in which the reader/audience response plays a considerable role. Through its primary referential field, interpretation is dependent on the socio-historical situation of the readers/audience which nevertheless in the metaphor becomes an integral part of a new referential field incorporating conceptual possibilities. Meaningful perspectives of the textual

image of the city thus can ultimately only be answered by teller, reader or audience, through the choice of imaginative interpretation.

To demonstrate some of the persuasive force of our metaphor of the city, we have chosen three topics for this investigation: the role of architectural features, the city as a woman, and the dialectic between Babylon and the heavenly city. Our investigation into architectural features of the city brought to mind Aristotle's characteristic of metaphor: "things are set before the eyes by words that signify actuality."[438] What becomes actuality is a human geography with its foundations in traditional Jewish-Christian core values in reference to "visible" buildings, walls, streets and sanctuaries. Evoked through the visualization of a city's architecture is a process of thinking. In analogy to traditional geographic space, the architectural imagery of the heavenly city opens space for critical evaluation of historic reality as well as imagination towards a new reality.

Our second topic of the city as woman offered a most arresting metaphor, deeply anchored in human life experience. In the text, the metaphor of the woman is apt to be a powerful image regarding its emotional quality. As political metaphor for the city, female imagery has been used throughout history to legitimise female subordination in community and among citizens. Critical evaluation should uproot any interpretations that enforce burdensome perspectives of a patriarchal culture. This would include emphasis on perspectives of creativity, change and solidarity as important connotations of female imagery, especially concerning the social and political realm.

[438] Aristot. *Rh.* 1411b.

While the first two topics have offered us an introduction into the many "rhetorical tactics" of our metaphor, the motivational dynamic from Babylon towards the heavenly city directed us to the politics of ideology and vision. Seeing the "shattering of the surface and furthermore of the merely cultural ideological context"[439] evokes the vision of a new city. Unmasking the ideological face of the city Babylon, allows the reader/audience to consciously realize her oppression and exploitation of human beings who are not part of the city's splendour, wealth and system of power. A city, the dystopian reality of Babylon, inspires motivational dynamics from Babylon towards the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. Space is opened for thought and imaginative exploration of a possible community rooted in the foundations of solidarity. The vision of the heavenly Jerusalem is a call, arising from the ideological critique against Babylon, to imagine a different city, a city of solidarity, the city of God.

The "dynamic" from Babylon towards the city of God therefore has a pictorial and suggestive quality which is an invitation and not a command for action. The poetic image leaves open space for personal decision and judgment of the readers and audience. The metaphor of the city does not offer a set of rules and structuring orders as political concept of the city/state. It is rather a call for human beings into the responsibility to exercise any means of creative imagination to build on God's city as dwelling of God among human beings.

[439] E. Bloch, *the Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 219.

[10]

Apocalypse Douce Ms 180. fol. 58v

The Angel Shows John the New Jerusalem

7. Metaphorical Imagination

> Totality in the religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom is solely of a totally transforming and exploding kind, is utopia; and, confronted with this totality, not only our knowledge, but also the whole of what has previously become, to which our conscience refers, then appears as unfinished work. As unfinished work or objective fragment precisely also in the most productive sense, not only in that of creatural limitation, let alone resignation. The 'Behold I make all things new', in the sense of apocalyptic explosion, is written above this and influences all great art with the spirit after which Dürer named his Gothic creation Apocalypsis Cum Figuris.[440]

In our textual image of the city, the Alpha erupting into the Omega exposes 'the whole of what has previously become' as 'unfinished work or objective fragment'. Great art shares with the world the state of unfinishedness, which consciously realizes calls for the hope that the path of pathos and process will be transformed into real possibility open towards ultimate reality, in the language of the Apocalypse, the city of God. This state of unfinishedness in art is an integral part of the above miniature [10], illustrating the moment the angel shows John the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9-14).[441] In the Douce Apocalypse [10], the colouring of folios 58v-61r has never been completed although it most likely was intended to be. Only golden layers radiate forcefully amid the graphic lines.

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[440] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 221.
[441] [10] Bodleian Library, Oxford, *Apokalypse Ms. Douce 180* . folio 58v (p92). (Library photo, with permission).

Yet the unfinishedness of the miniature enhances the referential dimension, a vision, in which John is taken by his hand and carried away on the back of an angel. The beautiful city built on twelve foundations (Rev 21:14) is an objective fragment of the possibility of fulfilment, the holy city. The vision transforms the world beyond its own boundaries, into the possible, a dimension impossible to become enclosed in language or art, utopia. The scene is not an arrival but a horizon of possibility, a non-completed visionary work that cries out for completion!

Horizon of Possibilities

The metaphorical network presents paradigms that point towards a "horizon of expectation" for the imagination of the readers or audience.[442] The "dynamic play" of the metaphor, as a play of possibilities presented through many differing perspectives, does not force into active involvement. It is a proposed world, which through imagination of reader or audience can become a horizon of possibilities open towards the "reality of the possible," a path for a possible transfer into human action. Ricoeur uses the term "horizon of expectation" to express the present-future relation, in which the experience of the historical past and present and the unfolding of the future in the horizon of expectation mutually condition each other. It is in the encounter between the metaphorical world of the text and the reader/audience that the metaphor can become imaginative appropriation of the metaphorical narrative, which is an act

[442] Ricoeur, *From Text to Action* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson. 95-98, also 218-19.

of personal commitment.[443] That this appropriation also includes the aspect of deconstruction of ideology and illusion has been subject of our last chapter. The positive imaginative appropriation of a new possible reality or, in our metaphor the new creation, the New Jerusalem, can only be built on the destruction of the ideological reality of the past and present world, Babylon. The critique of the unbearable clears the vision towards the open horizon of the new reality, the New Jerusalem.

In this last chapter, the focus will especially be on the vitality of our metaphor to become incentive for imaginative realization and exploration of text and world. In other words, we are interested in the "dynamic play" between text, reader/audience, and reality, which essentially shapes the act of appropriation and interpretation of the text. Textual visuality is explored as indispensable prerequisite for understanding and possible incentive for the dynamic process from text to action. The emphasis will be on the human ability of sympathetic imagination as an essential dimension to grasp universal concepts or the significance in a text. The focus will also be on imagination as visionary quality as incentive to think more and actively shape the future as realized possibility.

As biblical metaphor, the ultimate referent of our textual image is "God," a referent that is the culmination of the unlimited possibility of metaphorical perspectives, "opening up a horizon that escapes the closure of discourse."[444] Throughout the analysis, the city of God and the Lamb direct towards this open horizon, embracing cosmic, communal, historic, cultural and personal

[443] For the relation between textual interpretation and personal commitment see: Ibid. esp. 143-67.
[444] Ibid. 98.

dimensions: a dimensional totality which is the mysterion, God. Our analysis therefore will always be a stumbling attempt to point towards a reality, which already is the sum of all realities, a reality that as textual image is proposed as visionary direction for the responsible imaginative power of any human being.

7.1. Imaginative Vision

The metaphor of the city as complex composition suggests an abundance of possible references, which can resonate with life experience itself. In this sense, the metaphor of the city addresses reality, a shared world of the common culture including existence and history. The creative mind is not forced to fully remain in the boundaries of tradition and the physical world. The mind has the ability to use the perception of the textual material to think and imagine creatively. What is said in the text can be thought of in a new manner. What is visualized as textual image can be imagined in a different way.

Metaphorical Space

At the first glance, the composition of spatial relations in our metaphor of the city threatens to bewilder the reader/audience. The debate about the

original historic setting of the book of Revelation has been at the centre of numerous scholarly debates. Which city does the name Babylon announce? Is it the historical city Babylon or Rome or any other major city? The New Jerusalem is "coming down out of heaven" (Rev 21:2), but unto where? Heavenly creatures speak to communities in Asia Minor. The interplay between heaven and earth in our textual image does suggest certain references to known physical localities in the world yet not in an absolute sense. What is named Babylon can as well be called Rome! The Jerusalem on earth merges with the heavenly Jerusalem! The lines of clear distinction seem to be blurred. To resist literalness in search for spatial references in the metaphor, to prevent textual visuality from being frozen, we need to start reading imaginatively! The enemy of any imaginative exploration unfortunately has most often been the scholarly attempt to authoritatively historicize spatial reality in a text. This process does not allow for the multidimensionality of metaphorical references, neither does it tolerate creative reader/audience response. The debate over the original historical setting of John's Babylon is just one example in which historical-critical research requests accuracy at the cost of imagined possibilities. The danger is imminent when scholars readily identify Babylon with ancient Rome or argue vehemently for the city Jerusalem. Relations between textual historical material and life existence become rigidly limited. Do we really need to decide authoritatively, whether John saw Rome or Jerusalem as the harlot Babylon? In fact, what is needed is the search for the significance of Babylon in the context of shared life experience, which is an act of our imaginative visualization of the metaphorical composition. In other words, the image begins to speak as it resonates with life experience itself.

Physical spatiality as metaphorical reference first calls to mind existence of the past in its significance for present experience. Babylon therefore is important as an epitome of past experiences, which resonate with present experiences. Here lies the reason why second century Christians might have readily identified Babylon with Rome, while for a current reader/audience global capitalism becomes a vital reference.[445] To visualize space metaphorically as composition of past and present references is an all-important imaginative attempt to understand life in the context of history. This includes the sympathetic experience of fear that arises wherever Babylon is realized as universal experience in which the struggle for self-absorbed power threatens humanity. In this imaginative appropriation, Babylon as spatial reference sharpens awareness for a world that is ideological threat. What is gained in a textual visualization of Babylon is a critical distance from Babylon, an all-important step for seeing the present and future differently. In a similar way, imaginative appropriation also encompasses awe when envisioning a new spatial reality, the city of God, which as imaginative vision can only be understood in reference to the material of historic reality. This is why John envisions Jerusalem as heavenly city, which Dürer in his Apocalypse [3] readily appropriates to the medieval city in Western Europe.[446]

As textual visuality, geography becomes a new referential field, not only as human geography but also as "divine" geography. Geography as the metaphorical reference for the coming together of "divine and human realm" in

[445] H. Brook and A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now* 236-67.
[446] [3] Dürer, *Apocalypse: The Angel with the Key to the Bottomless Pit.*

the Son of God, the Lamb, the First and the Ultimate who was dead and came back to life (Rev 2:8). Space as visual application is thus a most important aspect in the visualization of common experience. The shared world is used as material to be appropriated creatively, to be thought of and spoken differently. In this sense, the text can provoke the readers/audience to reach out towards an ultimate horizon, in the words of the Apocalypse: "the ones who conquer will become a pillar in the temple of God, carrying the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven" (Rev 3:12).

As the compositional image of the metaphor begins to resonate with life itself, awareness grows for the lively significance of spatial relations. This includes space used as a paradigm for the identity of community. To imagine visually makes it possible to see the metaphor of the city as woman, to view her as paradigm for individual identity in the context of social identity. Imagination allows the reader/audience to realize personal identity in a context of personal responsibility in community. An abstract phenomenon, namely the exuberant ambition of the city Babylon as well as the vision of a new community, is not only given a human 'face' but also a social 'face'. The moment the reader/audience begins to explore imaginatively the metaphor of the spatial city as woman, the 'actual place' of the narrative metaphor can be realized as human society, as the aspirations and actions of human beings. To become aware of the lively significance of metaphorical space thus includes the ability to sympathize with others in finding a sense of permanence and consciousness of continuity, just as we find continuity walking through a place that still speaks of its history:

> Ancient ecclesiastical buildings, old orders of worship, music for use in services and so used for centuries, may evoke a sense of permanence and a living continuity with the past which is, at any rate, the life of Christianity. Such consciousness of continuity is...not separable from that human sympathy, the understanding of how other humans think and thought...In all instances of knowledge, then, in all language-using and all recollecting we are implicitly asserting our physical continuity with the past. However, the past, as I have observed, is not over and done with; our past determines how we interpret the present, in the light of the values we ascribe to things, and how we conceive of the future.[447]

As Warnock emphasizes, appropriation of historical past to present experience provides identity to human beings, identity, which cannot be understood apart from physical existence in time and space. To achieve this appropriation of text and life existence imaginative reader/audience response is crucial.

Mythical Time

References to time in our metaphor have puzzled scholars throughout the centuries just as much as spatial references. Although the narrative seems to move from the present situation of suffering towards the new creation, past, present, and future perspectives are interwoven throughout the textual image. The differing notions of time in our metaphor of the city seem confusing. The name of the city, Babylon, and her deeds closely relate her with human failure in the history of Israel. Her final destruction will be a future event, which nevertheless is narrated as the current dirge of the kings, merchants, and seafarers. The New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb, is a new creation in

[447] M. Warnock, *Imagination and Time* 148, 170.

reference to the origin, God's creative act in the beginning (Gen 1 - 2: 25). No closer could the end and beginning possibly be joined as in the metaphor of the new creation! Yet the images of this new creation use material known from our present world. The new city is anticipated with the stream of water of life, the tree of life, the disappearance of darkness, deception, desecration and lying (Rev 21:26-22:2). And to those who conquer will be given "to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God" (Rev 2:7).

In our metaphor of the city, time lacks a straightforward orderly direction as an artistic imagery like the one introducing this chapter, "the angel who shows John the New Jerusalem" from the Douce Apocalypse [10], is not confined to systematic temporality. Rather, references to time are compressed into a multidimensional composition of mythical time. Accordingly, the focus should not be on separate episodes in the text denoting a historical past or present, a messianic era or future visions about the heavenly Jerusalem.[448] The immediate question does not need to be the often-debated question of the original historical time of the book. Most important is neither the literal pursuit of a consecutive time line from the beginning to the end of cosmos and world nor a map for the future!

The "Now" of Existence

As human beings, we cannot live without our historical past, present or future. Identity exactly encompasses a consciousness of a self as someone who

[448] Cf. for example, J. M. Ford in her attempt to find accurate equivalence between history and images in the text. Illogical references regarding time are in particular explicated in a theory, which distinguishes different temporal periods of revelation in the Apocalypse. *Revelation* 26-57, 349-54, 360-70.

lives in a time including past, present and future.[449] Different cultures might put a stronger emphasis on one or the other aspect but humanity includes all of these perspectives.[450] An imaginative reader/audience response allows for mental visualization of simultaneous time-references. In that sense textual visuality can sharpen awareness for essential time, confronting the reader/audience with the Here and Now of existence itself. Central to the book is rather the mysterion of being alive itself, humanity as thrown into the Not-Yet-Decidedness, the possibility of definite Nothing or definite All, in the words of the Apocalypse, Babylon or the New Jerusalem. The metaphor of the city awakes consciousness for the lived moment of existence itself, the Now, in which everything drives onward.

In this Here and Now, the darkness of the origin lives in the moment of existence, in which the possibility of Babylon or the New Jerusalem causes horror and hunger for change:

> the darkness of the origin remains, as immediate darkness, unchanged in nearest nearness or in the continuing That of all existing itself. This That is still unresolved in every moment; the mysterious question of why anything is posed by the immediate existing itself as its own question. Its expression is creation renewed in and by every moment; the world as process is the experiment towards the resolution of the always and everywhere driving question of origin....Every lived moment would therefore, if it had eyes, be a

[449] M. Warnock, *Imagination and Time* 109-126.

[450] On the differences between notions of time in our Western culture and in the ancient world of the New Testament and in particular the Apocalypse, see: C. Osiek, "Apocalyptic Eschatology" *The Bible Today* 34/6 (1996) 341-45. Also B. J. Malina, "Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?" *Catholic Biblical Quaterly* 51/1 (1989): 1-31.

> witness of the beginning of the world which begins in time and time again; *every moment, when it has not emerged, is in the year zero of the beginning of the world. ...every moment therefore likewise potentially contains the date of the completion of the world and the data of its content.* [451]

In the Apocalypse, the promises given to the seven communities resonate this moment of existence in which the origin bears the possible seed for ultimate fulfilment. This is why the community in Ephesus is promised to be given from "the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God," (Rev 2:7) and the ones who conquer will become a pillar in the temple of God, carrying the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven (Rev 3:12). God among human beings holds the promise of the beginning (Gen 1:31), finally reaching its fulfilment, when anyone who conquers will share the throne with God and the Lamb (Rev 3:21) and death grief, crying, pain will not be anymore (Rev 21:4). Yet this moment is not here, in the Now of existence. In the words of the Apocalypse: Humanity is still living presently thrown into the darkness that carries the possibility of Babylon as well as the New Jerusalem. It is this Now of existence with its past brought into the present, in which the hunger for the creation of the new city is not satisfied.

In this sense, the apocalyptic imagery of the city confronts humanity with the moment of existence, which is always the decisive moment. Far from being a mere decorative element or the perception of several authors, the "illogical logic" of time in our metaphor of the city is essential to textual visuality because it forces the reader/audience to look beyond the immediate

[451] E. Bloch, *Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight 307-8.

text. It enables the readers/audience to visualize past, present and future simultaneously, as in certain paintings. This is to see the reference, to hear the resonance, to imagine metaphorically. It means to build relations, to see contrasts and correlations not only in the text but also in the context of life itself. Past and present history has to become part of the imagined picture. In other words, the text needs to become a more dimensional visualization that includes every perspective on life as composition. On this imaginative appropriation between text and world rests the ability of the reader/audience to understand, to find the significance in an otherwise incomprehensible accumulation of letters, words and phrases. The moment when the text begins to resonate with life experience is the moment when the metaphor comes alive and the moment, in which essential time unveils perspectives towards dimensions beyond human existence on earth.

7.2. Provocative Incentive

Although living in historical time is experienced so strongly; the metaphor of the city allows us to imagine the possibility that the entirety of our life experience is not the only constitutive factor of our existence. As the textual image offers a world as paradigm of human action, allowing the reader/audience to explore and examine others and themselves in dialogue with the proposed

world of the metaphor, critical distance to the dystopian reality of Babylon becomes the productive motive to think and imagine the world differently. The negative paradigm of the textual image of the woman, Babylon, thus permits a moment of distance, reflection and critical evaluation. Babylon is a vital part in the realization of ideology masked as beautiful city, a city where the relation to God is fundamentally broken, a place where "the blood of prophets and holy and all who have been slaughtered on earth" can be found (Rev 18:24). Without this realization, the fragmentary character of the world could not be realized and the status quo would be sanctioned. The state of the world as uncompleted will not become fertile energy for vision and change! In this sense, Babylon as the imaginary possibility of dangerous ideology and ultimately absolute Nothingness is most essential as motive for evaluation and critical energy to change a dystopian reality. Only the awareness of the always fragmentary in the world, the disgust with the intolerable status quo carries the necessary dynamic to explore and envision a possible new reality, and ultimately bring about a new city.

The textual image of the city provides a fragmented image, in which essentially the world and humanity is mirrored as the fragment of possible wholeness. Furious dissatisfaction with the world and humanity, which has its source in the conscious awareness of the fragment, open to the possibility of absolute darkness, explodes into critical energy for a new beginning. This is hope. This is the vision of the New Jerusalem. This 'fertile' darkness of the fragmentary is pregnant with reality of the possible, preparing the path for imagination of the possible and transfer into human action:

> the Omega of the Where To explains itself of the where From, of the origin, but on the contrary: this origin explains itself first with reference to the Novum of the end, indeed, as an origin still essentially unrealized in itself, it first enters reality with this Ultimum.[452]

Metaphorical imagination of the heavenly city thus is the moment in which the promise of the Alpha raises the expectation for the arrival at the Omega, in which God, the Alpha and Omega (e.g. Rev 21:6), already encompasses the story of humanity in search for completion of a fragmentary world. Epitomized as critical vision originating from the embarrassment of the promise still unfulfilled, historical reality turns towards its ultimate horizon, the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of God and the Lamb.

Vision of Future Possibility

The vivid textual image of the harlot stands in utter tension to the bride. She is barely characterized beyond her status as bride prepared for her wedding (Rev 21:2). Likewise, the fragmentary image of the possible is barely visible in the miniature from the Douce Apocalypse [10] in which the angel shows John the New Jerusalem. It is necessary to imagine and bring into being the possible, which has always been the city of God. This heavenly city is not a given in this world yet. Therefore, any attempt to objectify it completely, to pretend the vision has been accomplished fully here and now, leads to a dangerous ideology masking the always fragmentary in this world and denying visionary possibility.

[452] Ibid. 204.

The harlot and the bride become stereotypes with the power to enforce traditional roles of a patriarchal society! An envisioned ideal city turns into dystopian reality and human beings replace God and the Lamb on the throne! Yet the text offers a metaphor of the city, not a structured concept. To say "that Revelation is not liberating for women readers" therefore denies metaphorical language the power to incite imagination, to envision a new possible community.[453] Reading metaphorically means that the female images in the Apocalypse do not permit stereotypes or ideologies but call for the dynamic process of critical rethinking and re-imagining.

Visualization of the marriage between the bride and the Lamb calls to mind the "embodiment" of a human constitution. Imaginative appropriation suggests relation to the neighbour, the next, and the one whose path I cross today, tomorrow, any day as the foundation for community in the heavenly city. The deciding moment for the heavenly city is the Here and Now of humanity, the responsibility for the well-being of the other one as this one is for mine. The moment when humanity as new city, becomes part of a new creation emerges where "death will not be any more, moreover nor grief, nor crying nor pain will be there any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). A no more radical statement could be made regarding the power resulting from the strong commitment to live and act together in community, in contrast to the domination of the harlot over the people and nations and languages! This new

[453] T. Pippin, "The Revelation to John" in: E. Schüssler Fiorenza ed. *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary* Vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad 1994) 119.

community founded on the giving of selfhood through the other, rooted in giving and gift, is the heavenly city imaginatively thought of and explored as real possibility. Ultimately this community has its roots in "being as belonging to a being that precedes all objectifying."[454] The Lamb, the Son of God as metaphorical expression points to this belonging, which words cannot embrace. It is the utmost relation, which is beginning and end, the relation between the bride and the Lamb, the Son of God, which is the relation between the human being and God (Rev 21:3).

The female image of the city essentially transforms an abstract concept into a lively image, a provocative incentive to conscious realization and evaluation of the world, a stimulus for imaginative thought and future action. In that sense, the metaphor of the city is a call for responsible action in the face of a fragmentary world that cries out for completion. This is revelation of reality without enforcing norms and rules.

> The development of consciousness in human beings is inseparably connected with the use of metaphor. Metaphors are not merely peripheral decorations or even useful models, they are fundamental forms of our awareness of our condition; metaphors of space, metaphors of movement, metaphors of vision.[455]

As fundamental forms of awareness, metaphors can provide the necessary provocation that initiates imagination and change towards a new future. Human experience throughout history fails repeatedly in attempts to

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[454] P. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action* Trans. K. Blamey, J. B. Thompson. 143.
[455] I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* 363.

create the ideal city/community. The metaphor of the city does not solve the question of the best constitution. Nor does it give particular advice on organizational or practical matters regarding a constitution for the best city. Yet in referring towards essential values and perspectives rooted in the trust and belief in God and the Lamb, it calls human beings into responsibility in their personal creative search for the true ideal city. As with the communities in Asia Minor, we are still caught in the middle of the battle between Babylon and the beginning of the New Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the vision of a city, where the walls are the members, where the tree of life and the stream of life enhance a truly living community, where there is no pain, no tears nor death any longer, this vision should become an inspiration for anybody to work on the new city, to uproot whatever reminds us of the power of Babylon.

Imaginative appropriation by the reader or audience is a creative act, mediated through the procedures of text explanation yet always transgressing them. In this act of appropriation through critical evaluation and imaginative response, the metaphor is brought to "life," producing a call into responsibility for the neighbour, the community, the city/state, the world. Only in this sense can we say that the metaphor of the city is a dynamic concept for a new humanity on its way to the new creation. It becomes a call that constantly anew has to be answered through our critical response as participation in building the new community, a lifelong task of analytical as well as creative community formation.

7.3. Provocation to the Senses

Throughout this analysis, it has been our contention that the visualization of the text is a most important dimension in the understanding and appropriation of our metaphor of the city in the book of Revelation. Without the power of imagination as essential link between the chaos of a sense experienced world and an ordered universal, without making mental images, the metaphor of the city could not become a utopian vision. Predominantly, we analysed the textual image as cognitive incentive for understanding and critical evaluation. Yet there is another dimension to imaginative appropriation. The medieval artist, who objectifies the visions of the Apocalypse in beautiful miniatures, bears witness to a powerful imaginative force that allows for an emotional as well as cognitive response. Apocalyptic images open the fissure between the world and the heavens in Dürer's woodcuts. Horror, fear, terror, desire and awe are all part of imaginative appropriation of the images. Visuality in the Apocalypse renders the world and heavens intelligible by touching the senses and evoking emotional response.

Spectacle for the Senses

In contrast to the sterile language of reasoned thought, the places, physical bodies, and actions in the book of Revelation offer a spectacle that incites emotional responses. Christopher Frilingos draws attention to the "narrative spectacle" in the book of Revelation:

> The book of Revelation is a book of spectacles and spectators. From the outset, the text sketches arresting visions that combine awe and terror, wonder and horror.[456]

As one example, the lament over the imminent destruction of Babylon and the final eradication of this marvellous city presents the reader/audience with a spectacular scene. An army of evil spirits unclean beasts, birds, and plagues comes alive to cause horror and fear. The merchants and seafarers weep and lament over the loss of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen in short anything that is most preciously desired by human beings. "Alas! Alas! The city, the great one, Babylon, the city, the mighty one, in one hour has your judgment come!" (Rev 18:10). The text makes the smoke of the burning beauty visible. As imaginative spectators, the readers/audience feel the horror of destruction and pain of the large millstone crushing Babylon forever. The breath-taking drama allows for a highly emotional response of terror and fear, painting darkness as utmost possibility. As Frilingos observes, the spectacle strategy in the book of Revelation is an important part of its fascination. The text thus carries the seed to make the reader/audience, whether willingly or unwillingly, an emotional participant of the spectacle. In academic as well as religious contexts, appeal to the senses and emotions, has often been a tool judged with suspicion. However, this does not reduce its effectiveness. The emotional appeal of spectacular imagery in the Apocalypse throughout history has always been a provocative

[456] C. Frilingos, "Viewing Monsters in the Book of Revelation" *Paper presented to John's Apocalypse and Cultural Contexts Ancient and Modern Consultation SBL/AAR* Boston, 1999.

characteristic. Moreover, imagining the spectacle most often seems a bridge between text and action.

Sexuality

Another example of particular emphatic response to the textualized image has its origin in the metaphorical play between the city and the human body. Language touches the senses in a most intimate manner in the figure of the harlot, and the bride, and articulation in the book of Revelation is not shy. Scenes of voluptuous pleasure are graphic: "the harlot…with whom the kings of the earth have committed immorality and with the wine of whose immorality the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk." (Rev 17:2-3) The "mother of harlots and earth abominations" (Rev 17:5) offers incentives for imaginative thought, restricted only by the bruised sensitivity of an offended reader/audience. The bride clothed in white linen, although not pictured quite as spectacular, does carry emotional quality. The dawn of new life becomes an epitome of hope and fulfilment. If the power of imagination seeks the significance of the text in life itself, the emotional quality of sexual visuality in the Apocalypse surely enhances appropriation in a most exciting way. Imagination becomes an act of empathy. Visual art and visualized textuality begin to cause the same effective response David Freedberg describes for the objectified expression in art:

> …although the images are inert, dead, or of divine beings, when we look at them with gaze that enlivens, our responses are likely to be akin to, if not identical to, the responses that would arise with ordinary human beings. Indeed any suggestion of the sexual, or any

> perception of sexual potential, is likely to enhance the strain to enlivenment and possession...[457]

The problem is that scholars most often feel uncomfortable dealing with emotional response of readers/audience. Academic work rather seeks the secure boundaries of detached high formalization of pictures or in our case of the text. Accordingly, it seems safer to investigate the two women or the beast in the textual image of the city as a stereotype or topos familiar to a first century audience or to emphasize the transformation of the women into the two cities Babylon and the city of God than to explore reader/audience response that might enliven the image.[458] As Freedberg observes "the obstacle is our reluctance to reinstate emotions as part of cognition."[459] Scholarly security unfortunately loses the efficacy of the image. The image of the city carries the potential to stimulate a highly imagined response, a textualized visuality, which is by no means detached from emotional involvement. On the contrary, the spectacular and the sexually prominent dimensions are an all-important incentive to think and imagine Babylon as well as the New Jerusalem! Moreover, if we follow Bloch who identifies hope as "most important expectant emotion, the most

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[457] D. Freedberg, *The Power of Images* 360.

[458] See e.g. Barbara Rossing who in a recent study focuses on the rhetorical function and persuasive appeal of the two city visions:

> The two feminine figures provide only a dualistic structure of ethical contrast that can be adapted and filled out with a range of topics.

The Choice between Two Cities: Whore, Bride, and Empire in the Apocalypse (15). With her formistic approach, Rossing effectively controls the persuasive appeal of the images and restrains the power to provoke an emotional reader response.

[459] Ibid. 430.

authentic emotion of longing and thus of self," textual visuality of our metaphor cannot become utopian vision as pure cognitive thought alone.[460]

Dangerous Visualization

With the acknowledgment of the emotional quality of this book, the question of rhetorical seduction again enters centre stage. Can faith, which lies beyond images and beyond language, be rhetorically materialized? Is it possible that faith, cloaked in artistic language, touches the senses?

> There has always been a dangerous relationship between art and religion, and, where theology hesitates, art will eagerly try to explain. Art may here be seen as the more 'dangerous' where 'pure thought' is the less powerful..... In fact, unless specifically prevented from doing so, art instinctively materializes God and the religious life. This has been nowhere more true than in Christianity, which has been served by so many geniuses. [461]

Visualization of the imaginary faces criticism that has followed persuasive techniques since antiquity. Plato's rejection of visual art as mere deceitful imitation of the real should be a persistent warning that images can be deceptive.[462] As the painter is far removed from reality, poets create phantoms

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[460] E. Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* Trans. N. Plaice, S. Plaice, P. Knight. 75.
[461] I. Murdoch, *Existentalists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* 447.
[462] Plat. *Rep. 598-99.*

> For the good poet, if he is to poetize things rightly, must, they argue, create with knowledge or else be unable to create. So we must consider whether these critics have not fallen in with such imitators and been deceived by them, so that looking upon their works they cannot perceive that these are three removes from reality, and easy to produce without knowledge of the truth. For it is phantoms, not realities, that they produce.

and not truth. Plato certainly knew about the dangers of mythological language when he banished the poets from his best/ideal city in the *Republic.*[463] His criticism that mythical language is not serving truth strikes at the heart of religious and metaphysical thinking. The question is raised whether the spectacular mythological drama in the Apocalypse paralyses the reader/audience in amazement, whether the "not-real" blinds and prevents imaginative thinking and creative action?[464]

The danger is a real one. If the Angel, who shows John the New Jerusalem in the Douce Apocalypse [10], is not understood as metaphor but as mere imitation, the consolation of art becomes a dangerous illusion.[465] If reference is not metaphorical reference any more, the textual image becomes deceit, cloaked in the same beautiful dress as Babylon. If the spectacular mythological drama entices the reader/audience into suppressing critical thought, the text becomes a dangerous weapon. On a theological level, the loss of the metaphor means that the vision of the ineffable God is lost, which had been evoked amidst the ambiguity between the heavens and the earth. Lost is the power to transform humanity, the world, and the cosmos. Only as metaphor does the uneasiness caused by the fissure between appearance and fragment never allow mere objectified sight. Only metaphorically, can appearance open space to

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Trans. P. Shorey. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April, 2000.

[463] Plat. *Rep.* 595a-b.

[464] C. Frilingos, "Viewing Monsters in the Book of Revelation" 10-11.

[465] This, of course, is a post Kantian judgment of modern sensibility about art. The medieval artist and observer would most likely have seen the figures and objects in the miniature as an indicator of truth 'via similitudine'. They would have been integral parts of a symbolic universe, in which every symbol had its harmonious place in a harmonious system of religious understanding. See: U. Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* esp.52-73.

think and imagine beyond the boundaries of textual material and historical world experience. The metaphor does not simply console but is a relentless incentive to think more, to imagine and hopefully to provide an incentive for action.

Epilogue

It has been the thesis of this study that the text-embedded world of the Apocalypse can impel the reader or audience into a new understanding of world and cosmos in a manner similar to visual arts. The contention was that visualization of the textual embedded world and cosmos in the Apocalypse allows for necessarily partial and never fully completed reality depiction, which stimulates imaginative exploration, critical evaluation, hope, thought, and ultimately action. Mental visualization as well as its objectified expression in art provides the all-important link between the chaos of a sense experienced world and ideas not present to us in fact.[466] The metaphor of the city as visual textuality can become an incentive to uncover an "unfinished world" as potential for change towards the possible. The question is are we again "at a loss when faced with Apocalyptic"[467] dealing with imagery that leaves the reader/audience at the present moment of decisiveness without clear direction for the future?

[466] M. Warnock, *Imagination* 31-31.
[467] The famous title used by Seán Kealy originates from a literal translation of a title used in a polemical survey by Klaus Koch "Ratlos vor der Apokalyptik."

Does the highly persuasive emotional quality of the imagery, as Frilingos points out, lock the readers/audience into engagement with a spectacle that all too easily leads to the mere pleasure of gazing at the horrible destruction of Babylon?[468] Or, are we diverted by the emotional power of sexual allusiveness in the text?

It is certainly true that an interpretation of textual visuality does not allow for the accurate answers of the Enlightenment paradigm, "the relay-race model in which one could hand over the original meaning like a baton to other theologians."[469] The concept of textual visuality as an interpretive approach is far more dangerous because it reveals vistas for the imagination. This of course bears the possibility that the reader/audience might leave the secure realm of traditional values and beliefs. Even more pressing, the acknowledgment of emotional qualities has been one of the arch-enemies to reasoned thought. In that sense, the Enlightenment paradigm seeks to offer a safe guide towards an interpretation which supposedly is the only real source for truth. Yet the problem is that the power of the text to incite imagination is forgotten and textual visuality is relegated to a process of systematically decoding images. The text would not come alive even if scholars were successful in finding a correspondent for every image, even if they were able to uncover every detail about the original setting and author. What is urgently needed in any reading is the moment of empathy with actions and actors in the text, which, as I have tried to argue, is an act of imagination by the reader/audience. The text comes alive if it begins to resonate with life-experience itself. This does not mean that we can

[468] C. Frilingos, "Viewing Monsters in the Book of Revelation" 10-11.
[469] Seán Kealy, "At a Loss When Faced with Apocalyptic" 296.

read without the historical dimension. In a dynamic imaginative act, the all-important role of history is in the search for the significance in life experience. Here, the historical dimension takes its place together with present experience and future possibility, in the language of the Apocalypse: the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (Rev 22:2).

Rather than offering a set of answers, metaphorical language functions as question. To the reader/audience metaphorical language hands over the responsibility of imagining a city that "has no need of the sun nor the moon to give her light, for the glory of God enlightens her and her lamp is the Lamb" (Rev 21:23). All scholarly interpretation can hope for is to flesh out "objectified visuality" in the awareness that the metaphor of the city begins to speak when imaginative visualization allows for exploration of the possible. Interpretation ultimately needs to leave this possibility open for the reader/audience response.

What seems to me to be needed in biblical scholarship is a heightened awareness that any interpretation, as necessary as it is, does not destroy space for imaginative thought. This becomes even more important since we are dealing with the ultimate referent, God. Any language attempt therefore can only be a first step, pointing towards a reality, which is already the sum of all realities, the mysterion. Without realizing the metaphor, God becomes a dangerous ideology. Without realizing the city in the book of Revelation as metaphor, community turns into ideology. The spectacle can take over and fundamentalists know the end of time. Indeed, we are "at a loss faced with the Apocalyptic."

Textual visuality can serve as an important vehicle because its emphasis is on the compositional qualities of the metaphor to surprise, to face the illogical

logic of the composition, which hampers the craving to see the text as mere imitation. As Rowland points out, "art defies explanation" and therefore alerts us interpreters to the danger of destroying imaginative space by decoding the text.[470] Drawing the analogy between textual visuality and objectified visual expression in art should be a constant reminder of the significance of any imaginative act, which is the all important aspect for understanding, judgment, and in Bloch's words, hope.

Mythological language in the book of Revelation incites imaginative thought. It therefore is dangerous to read and leaves space for a multitude of various interpretive approaches. Yet is not the most critical fear the panic that the status quo might come into question, that new ways of thinking, believing, and acting might result from a text like the Apocalypse? Does not that fear keep us in the grip of Babylon, like the seafarers, the merchants, and kings? Entering a new millennium, I think we should keep in mind the vision of utopian unconditionality, which in the Apocalypse explodes into "See, I make all things new!" (Rev 21:5).

[470] "The Book of Revelation; Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections" in: L. E. Keck ed. *The New Interpreter's Bible* Vol. XII 550.

The Text

Rev 1:19 Now, write what you have seen, and what is, and what surely is to take place after this: 1:20 the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven lampstands, golden ones; the seven stars are the angels of the seven communities and the seven lampstands are the seven communities.

Proclamation to Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7)

Rev 2:1 To the angel of the community in Ephesus write:

The words of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

2:2 "I know your works, your hardship and your patient endurance and that you cannot bear evil ones and you have put those to test who call themselves apostles - but they are not - and you have found them to be false; 2:3 and that you hold patient endurance and that for my name's sake you have laboured and have not grown weary. 2:4 But I hold this against you that you have dismissed your first love. 2:5 Think about where you have fallen from and change your ways and do the former works. If not, I will come to you and I will move your lampstand from its place - if you do not change your way. 2:6 Yet this you hold that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I hate. 2:7 Anyone who has an

ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities. To anyone who conquers I will give to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God"

Proclamation to Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11)

2:8 And to the angel of the community in Smyrna write:

The words of the First and the Ultimate who was dead and came back to life:

2:9 "I know your distress and your life of a beggar - but you are rich – also, I know the blasphemy of those saying they are Jews – but they are not – but are a synagogue of Satan. 2:10 Do not fear what you are going to suffer. See the devil is going to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested and you will be under distress for ten days. Be faithful up to your death and I will give to you the crown of life. 2:11 Anyone who has an ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities. Anyone who conquers shall not suffer injustice by the second death."

Proclamation to Pergamum (Rev 2:12-17)

2:12 And to the angel of the community in Pergamum write:

The words of the one who has the two-edged sword:

2:13 "I know where you live: where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold firmly my name and you have not renounced your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my witness, my faithful one who was killed among you where Satan lives. 2:14 But I hold a few things against you: you have some there who hold firmly the teachings of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw temptation before the sons of Israel, to eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality. 2:15 Likewise you have some who in the same way hold the teachings of the Nicolaitans. 2:16 therefore, change your ways. If not, I will quickly come and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 2:17 Anyone who has an ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities. To anyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give to him a white stone, and on that stone is written a new name that no one knows but the one who receives it."

Proclamation to Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29)

2:18 And to the angel of the community in Thyatira write:

The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine bronze:

2:19 "I know your works: love, faith, service and your patient endurance and that your works, your ultimate ones, are more plentiful than your first ones. 2:20 But I hold this against you that you tolerate that woman Jezebel who, calling herself a prophetess not only teaches but also deceives my servants to commit immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 2:21 I gave her time that she may

change her ways but she does not desire to change out of her ways of immorality. 2:22 See, I am throwing her on a bed and the ones who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they change their ways away from her deeds. 2:23 Also, I will strike her children with death. And all the communities will know that I am the one who searches minds and hearts and I will give to each of you according to your works. 2:24 But to these other ones in Thyatira who do not hold this teaching, the ones who have not acknowledged the deep secrets of Satan, as they say, I do not throw another burden on you; 2:25 yet hold fast to what you have until I come. A 2:26 To anyone who conquers and keeps firm my works until the end, I will give power over the nations, 2:27 to care for them with an iron sceptre as if earthen containers are shattered; 2:28 like I myself received power from my father. To anyone who conquers I will give the morning star. 2:29 Anyone who has an ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities."

The Message to Sardis (Rev 3:1-6)

3:1 And to the angel of the community in Sardis write:

The words of the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works: that you have a name that you are alive but you are dead. 3:2 Become alive and strengthen the remaining that is ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before my God. 3:3 Keep in mind; therefore, in what way you received and heard and keep firm and change your ways. If you are not

alive, I will come like a thief and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 3:4 Yet you hold a few names in Sardis who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white since they are worthy. 3:5 Anyone who conquers will be clothed in white clothes and I will not erase the name of this person from the book of life and I will profess name of this person before my Father and before his angels. 3:6 Anyone who has an ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities."

Proclamation to Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13)

3:7 And to the angel of the community in Philadelphia write:
The words of the holy one, the true one, who holds the key of David, when he opens no one, will close and when he closes no one opens:
3:8 "I know your works: See, I have offered you an open door which no one can close for you hold little power and you have kept firm my word and you have not renounced my name. 3:9 See, I will permit those from the synagogue of Satan, those saying they are Jews – and they are not but lie. - See, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 3:10 For you have kept firm my word of patient endurance; I will also guard you from the hour of temptation, which is coming upon the entire world to tempt those inhabiting the earth. 3:11 I am coming quickly. Hold firmly what you have so that no one may take your crown. 3:12 Anyone who conquers I will make this one to be a pillar in the temple of my God and this one will never go

out of it. I will write on this one the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name. 3:13 Anyone who has an ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities."

Proclamation to Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22)

3:14 And to the angel of the community in Laodicea write:

The words of the Amen, the witness, the faithful and true one, the beginning of God's creation:

3:15 "I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. Oh that you were cold or hot! 3:16 So, for you are tepid, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 3:17 Namely you say: I am wealthy and I have become rich and I have no need of anything – yet you do not know, that you are the miserable one, pitiable and poor and blind and naked. 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich and white garments that you may clothe yourself and that may not be seen the shameful deeds of your nakedness, and eye salve to smear on your eyes that you may see. 3:19 Whomever I love, I discipline and give guidance. Therefore, be eager and repent. 3:20 See, I am standing at the door and knock, whenever anyone will hear my voice and will open the door, I will come in to this one and eat with this one and this one with me. 3:21 Anyone who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne like I myself conquered and have a place with my Father on

his throne. 3:22 Anyone who has an ear should hear what the spirit says to the communities."

The Harlot, Babylon, the Great One (Rev 17:1-18)

17:1 And there came one of the seven angels holding the seven bowls and talked with me saying:

"Come, I will show the judgment of the harlot, the great one, the one sitting upon many waters, 17:2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed immorality and with the wine of whose immorality the inhabitants of the earth have become drunk."

17:3 And he carried me away in the spirit into the desert, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of names of blasphemy, holding seven heads and ten horns. 17:4 And the woman was clothed in purple, and scarlet, and covered with gold, jewellery, and priceless stone, and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her immorality. 17:5 And on her forehead was engraved a name, a mystery: *Babylon, the great one, the mother of harlots and of earth's abominations*. 17:6 And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the holy people and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And seeing her, I wondered with great admiration.

17:7 But the angel said to me: "Why do you wonder with great admiration? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and the beast that supports her and that holds seven heads and ten horns. 17:8 The beast that you saw, was, yet is not, but is about to ascend from the abyss and it departs into utter destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names are not written into the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder with great admiration seeing the

beast, for it was, yet is not, but it will be present. 17:9 This calls for a mind that has wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings: 17:10 five have fallen, one is, another has not yet made an appearance and when he appears he must only stay for a little while. 17:11 And the beast itself that was, yet is not, it is an eighth yet is of the seven and departs into utter destruction. 17:12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom but receive power like kings for one hour with the beast. 17:13 These share the same intention and give their strength and power to the beast. 17:14 They will fight with the Lamb and the Lamb will conquer them for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are the ones called, and the ones chosen and faithful." 17:15 And he said to me: "the waters that you saw, where the harlot sits, are people and multitudes and nations and languages. 17:16 And the ten horns that you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot, and bring about her ruin and nakedness, and they will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire. 17:17 For God has put into their hearts to carry out his will namely sharing one intention, and giving their kingdom to the beast until the words of God will be fulfilled. 17:18 And the woman whom you saw is the city, the great one, who holds royal dominion over the kings of the earth.

The Destruction of Babylon (Rev 18:1-24)

18:1 After this, I saw another angel, coming down from heaven, holding great power, and the earth was enlightened by his glory. 18:2 And he exclaimed with a mighty voice, saying:

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon, the great one, and has become a home for evil spirits, and a prison for every unclean spirit, and a prison for every unclean bird, and a prison for every unclean and hated beast. 18:3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of her passionate immoral longing, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants have grown rich with the wealth of her delicacy."

18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven saying:

"Escape, my people, from her, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues! 18:5 For her sins have piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her acts of injustice. 18:6 Repay her as she herself has paid and double unto her double according to her works, in the cup that she has mixed, mix her double. 18:7 As she glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and grief give her, for in her heart she says: 'As queen I rule, I am no widow, sorrow I will never see.' 18:8 For this reason in a single day her plagues will come, death and grief and famine and she will be burned up with fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

18:9 And the kings of the earth who committed immorality and lived deliciously with her will weep and lament for her when they see the smoke of her burning; 18:10 standing at a distance in fear of her torment, saying: "Alas! Alas! The city,

the great one, Babylon, the city, the mighty one, in one hour has your judgment come!"

18:11 And the merchants of the earth weep and grieve over her, since no one buys their cargo any more, 18:12 cargo of gold, and silver, and jewels, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet garment, and every kind of scented wood, and every kind of ivory vessels, and every kind of priceless wooden vessels, and bronze and iron and marble, 18:13 and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and fragrant oil, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour and wheat, and cattle, and sheep, and horses, and chariots and bodies, namely human souls. 18:14 Yet the fruit of your passionate longing of the soul has gone from you and all the grandeur and glamour have perished from you, never one will find them again! 18:15 The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand at a distance in fear of her torment crying and grieving,

18:16 saying: "Alas, Alas, this city, the great one, clothed in fine, purple and scarlet linen, and covered with gold, and jewels and pearls, 18:17 for in a single hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!" And all shipmasters, and all seafarers, and sailors and whoever trades by sea, stood at a distance, 18:18 and cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying: "Who is like this city, the great one?" 18:19 And they threw dust on their heads, and cried weeping and grieving, saying: "Alas, Alas, this city, the great one, where all who had ships at sea grew rich with her wealth! For in a single hour she has been brought to ruin!" 18:20 Rejoice over her! O heaven, you holy ones and apostles and prophets, for God has administered judgment for you against her.

18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone, like a large millstone and threw it into the sea saying: "With such violence will Babylon, the great city, be thrown and will never be found anymore. 18:22 And the sound of harpists, musicians, flute players and trumpeters, shall not be heard in you anymore. And all artists of whatever artistic ability shall not be found in you anymore. And the sound of the millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. 18:23 And the light of a lamp shall not be visible in you anymore. And the sound of the bridegroom and the bride shall not be heard in you anymore; for your merchants were people of high status on earth and all nations were led astray by your witchcraft. 18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and holy and all who have been slaughtered on earth."

A New Creation (Rev 21:1-8)

21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had gone away and the sea is no more. 21:2 And I saw the city, the holy one, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride, made beautiful for her husband. 21:3 And I heard a great voice from the throne saying:

"See, the home of God is among human beings, he will live with them and they will be his people and he himself, God, will be with them and be their God. 21:4 And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not be any more, moreover nor grief, nor crying nor pain will be there any more, for the former things have passed away."

21:5 And the one sitting on the throne said:

"See, I make all things new!" He also said: "Write, for these words are trustworthy and true." 21:6 He also said to me: "It is done! I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the fulfilment. To the thirsty, I will give from the spring of water of life gratis. 21:7 Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. 21:8 But for those who are cowards, and faithless, and corrupt, and murderers, and those who practice immorality, and witchcraft, and idolatry, and all the liars, their part will be in the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second death."

The New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9-22:5)

21:9 And one of the seven angels came, who hold the seven bowls of the seven final plagues and spoke to me saying:

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 21:10 And in the spirit he took me away on a great, exalted mountain, and showed me the city, the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, 21:11 holding the glory of God: her brilliance resembling a most precious stone, like Jasper, bright as crystal 21:12 having a great high, exalted wall, holding twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written on them, that are the names of the twelve tribes of the descendants of Israel, 21:13 on the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates; 21:14 and the wall of the city having twelve foundations, and upon them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

21:15 And the one talking to me had a golden measuring rod to measure the city, and her gates, and her wall. 21:16 The city is laid out as a square, and her length is the same as the width. And the one measured the city with the measuring rod; twelve thousand stadia; the length, and the width, and the height of her are equal. 21:17 And the one measured her wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by human measure, which is the angel's measure. 21:18 And the material of her wall is jasper, and the city pure gold, like pure crystal. 21:19 And the foundations of the wall of the city are beautiful with precious stones: the foundation stone, the first one, jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, 21:20 the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite,

the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. 21:21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls: each of the gates is of a single pearl. And the wide road of the city is pure gold, transparent as crystal.

21:22 And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord, God, the Almighty and the Lamb is her temple. 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun nor the moon to give her light, for the glory of God enlightens her and her lamp is the Lamb. 21:24 And the nations will walk in her light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into her. 21:25 And her gates will never be locked by day - and there will be no night there. 21:26 And one will bring the glory and honour of the nations into her. 21:27 But nothing profane shall enter her nor anyone performing desecration or lying, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

22:1 And the one showed me the stream of water of life, sparkling like crystal, emerging from the throne of God and of the Lamb, into the middle of the wide road of her. 22:2 On either side of the stream, a tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, surely producing fruit for each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 22:3 Nothing cursed will be there. And the throne of God and the Lamb will be in there. And his servants will serve him. 22:4 They will see his face and his name will be upon their foreheads. 22:5 And night will not be there, no one has need for the light of the lamp, or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will enlighten them and they will reign forever and ever.

Abbreviations

LCL	Loeb Classic Library, Cambridge: Harvard University, 1914. Available [Online] Crane, G. R. ed. *The Perseus Project* http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, January, 2001.
Aristot. *Eud. Eth.*	Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* (LCL)
Aristot. *Nic. Eth.*	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (LCL)
Aristot. *Poet.*	Aristotle, *Poetics* (LCL)
Aristot. *Pol.*	Aristotle, *Politics* (LCL)
Aristot. *Rh.*	Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (LCL)
Augustine, *Civ. Dei.*	Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
BAGD	Bauer, W. Arndt, W. F. Gingrich, W. F. Danker, F. W. eds. Greek-English Lexicon of the NT 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979.
BR	Biblical Research
BWHEBB	*BibleWorks* Hebrew Keyboard available: Bible Works (Version 3.5. revised 12/19/96) M. S. Bushell ed. [CD-Rom] Big Fork: Hermeneutika, 1992- 97.
BWGRKL	*BibleWorks* Greek Keyboard available: Bible Works (Version 3.5. revised 12/19/96) M. S. Bushell ed.[CD-Rom] Big Fork: Hermeneutika, 1992-97.
Cic. *Rosc. Am.*	Cicero, *Pro Roscio Amerino* (LCL)
Hdt.	Herodotus, *Histories* (LCL)
Hes. *Wd.*	Hesiod, *Works and Days* (LCL)
Hh.	*Homeric Hymns* (LCL)
Hom. *Od.*	Homer, *Odyssey* (LCL)
Int	Interpretation
ITQ	Irish Theological Quaterly (Maynooth)
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament -Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
Justin Martyr, *Dial.*	Saint Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Available: Michael S. Bushell and Michael D. © 1998 *Bible Works* (Version 3.5. revised 12/19/96) [CD-Rom] (Big Fork: Hermeneutika 1992-97).
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTS	New Testament Studies
Plat. *Crat.*	Plato, *Cratylus* (LCL)
Plat. *Gorg.*	Plato, *Gorgias* (LCL)
Plat. *Laws*	Plato, *Laws* (LCL)

Plat. *Rep.*	Plato, *Republic* (LCL)
Plat. *Tim.*	Plato, *Timaeus* (LCL)
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
Tacitus, *Ann.*	Tacitus, *Annals.* (*Annalium, Ab Excessu Divi Augusti Libri*) ed. C. D. Fischer. Oxford: Oxford University, 1981.
Tertullian, *adv. Marcion*	Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*
Verg. *A.*	Vergil, *Aeneid* (LCL)
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

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